Vol. CIV No. 12 June 10, 1977 75 cents

commonweal

CATHOLIC ANNULMENTS: A DEHUMANIZING PROCESS

STEPHEN J. KELLEHER

DESMOND FISHER EXPORTING DEATH TO IRELAND
MARGO HAMMOND TWO CHRISTS IN ITALY
FRANK GETLEIN PAST IMPERFECT, FUTURE IMPER.
PETER STEINFELS THREE TALES OF A CITY
ABIGAIL McCARTHY COMMUNION IN THE HAND
COLIN L. WESTERBECK, JR. BORN AGAIN
GERALD WEALES ASHES AND AFTER

SAUL MALOFF STAYING IN TOUCH
JANET GROTH CHEERS FOR JOHN CHEEVER
ALSO: SARA C. CHARLES, BURNE HOGARTH, JOHN B. SHEERIN, JOHN DRUSKA, STU COHEN

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NEWS & VIEWS

Nuns as Jailers

A curious piece of information cropped up in two Religious News Service stories of May 16 dealing with the detention of 33 Americans in Bolivian jails for from one to three years, most of them on narcotics charges, and all but four untried in the courts.

It was that in La Paz, the American women prisoners are incarcerated in a secured compound, of which the Good Shepherd Sisters are in charge.

The fact was conveyed offhandedly by a recently returned Catholic missionary priest. When a reporter expressed surprise at such an arrangement, the priest, who remained anonymous out of fear of reprisals against the imprisoned Americans or other missionaries, was at a loss to explain. He added only that that was the way all women prisoners in La Paz were kept in custody during the several years he had been stationed there.

The Bolivian government pays the nuns for this activity, he declared.

Some further light was shed by Michelle Fryer, 22, of Pottsdown, Pa., who was released by Bolivian authorities on May 14 and who appeared before the press in the office of Senator H. John Heinz (R-Pa.).

She told of nearly 11 months' imprisonment in the sisters' compound. Miss Fryer, a Lutheran, explained that she and 67 others, most of them Bolivians, were kept in the basement of the convent, with no privacy and in an area built to accommodate 35 persons. They were moved to the courtyard of the convent daily, and remained there from 9 a.m. to 6:30 p.m., regardless of the weather. The "head warden," a nun, locked them back in the basement at 7:45 p.m., she stated.

Asked by RNS why she and other women prisoners in La Paz were incarcerated in a convent, she declared obliquely that until about 15 years ago men and women prisoners were kept in the same prison there.

The men were removed. "But then the nuns, out of the 'graciousness' of their hearts, asked that they be allowed to keep the women prisoners," and the government agreed. RNS reported Miss Fryer as speaking "with unconcealed sarcasm."

RNS identified the Bolivian nuns as belonging to the Sisters of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd, founded in France in 1641 and headquartered in Rome, with a Bolivian province (and five in the U.S.).

At the time of this writing, news focuses were primarily on the "inadequate action" of the U.S. State Department on behalf of the "beleaguered Americans." Eleven senators, for instance, made public a letter to Secretary of State Cyrus Vance demanding that the situation in Bolivia be given his personal attention and that contact at the highest level of the Bolivian government be initiated.

However, I can see focuses shifting by the time of this reading to the nun issue —as well it might. The corporal works of mercy ask the visiting of the imprisoned, not the enforcement of their prison terms.

Reunion's Detour

Two of England's leading opinion journals—*The Tablet*, Catholic; *The Economist*, general—have taken remarkably contrasting positions of the recent meeting in Rome of the Anglican Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr. Coggan, and Pope Paul VI.

Both were disappointed with the results of the meeting, but while *The Tablet* was lamenting the lack of sympathy in Rome for Anglican-Roman Catholic convergence, *The Economist* was accenting the dissipation of "false expectations." "The unity train, which has seemed to be gathering speed, has come to a halt," said *The Economist*.

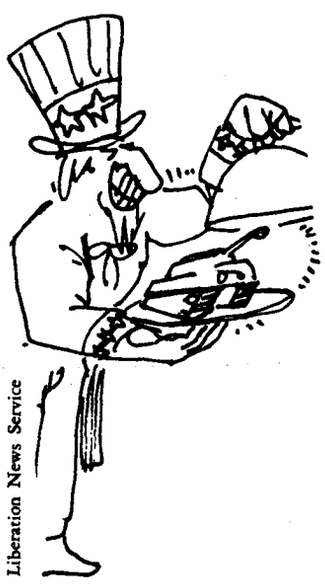
The Economist is not disconsolate over this seeming development. It has long felt that "two domes were better than one," and that a single church organization could in fact lead to more disunity than the churches hitherto have known. Now it urges that Rome and Canterbury use the pause in momentum to ask themselves whether indeed they have "a common faith sufficient to be translated into communion of life, worship and mission." It doubts they do.

In any case, says *The Economist*, presuming that a Christian revival is possible, "a secular newspaper may be forgiven for saying that . . . competition is no bad thing."

This is not a notion shared by *The Tablet*. It is anxious for unity and is annoyed that Canterbury "is content to drift with the tide," while Rome by and large "does not want to know that there is a tide."

That tide, which appeared to be irreversible last January when a committee of Anglican and Roman Catholic theologians offered a vision of the churches reuniting under a modified form of papal supremacy [*Commonweal*, 2/18/77], has been undertowed by Anglican ordination of women and by Rome's resistance anew to the suggestion of intercommunion.

Still, *The Tablet* isn't giving up. "The energies available for further dialogue should now be channeled in other directions," it commented. "These are chiefly in the moral field. . . . it is here where Catholic suspicions of Anglicanism are most obstinate, here where clarification would do most to quiet the fears of those to whom dogma means little and morals, especially sex morals, almost everything."



Liberation News Service

Geriatric Catholicism

Better watch out, says Father Eugene Kennedy, M.M.; the American Church is getting old.

Priests and nuns are aging, and their care "has become a major burden." Also, "mainstay supporters are on the brink of old age, or making their way up the slippery steps of middle age."

His concern: That the American Church will soon look like Churches in other countries—"filled with old people lost in devotion."

Odds and Ends

—Can Americans ever be made energy conservators by higher and higher gasoline taxes, as President Carter would have it? Doubtful, say I. No, says Dave Altman of the recreational vehicle industry. "I honestly believe people have resigned themselves to a dollar a gallon," he says. "The price is not the problem at all. It's the availability." My guess: People will pay much more than a dollar a gallon to keep wheels under them. They'll pay as Europeans pay, and in some parts of Europe gasoline is $2.40 a gallon!

JOHN DEEDY

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CORRESPONDENCE

Courage and Risk

Heidelberg, West Germany

To the Editors: Your editorial on "The Yorkville Report" [Mar. 4] proved my fears to be reality. The loss of belief in the mysteries of the faith has to be everyone's concern and fault. If people were made more aware of what faith has accomplished, perhaps they would see an alternative to "jumping off bridges" to solve problems. The examples of Lourdes and Fatima are too wonderful to keep hushed up.

And maybe the Church should show a little more courage and risk its wealth to pass on a richer message. A moratorium on the building of schools is a form of faithlessness in itself, a fear that funds will run out. This doesn't mean we should go on some wild spending spree, but the Lord hasn't let us down yet for these near 2000 years.

The Church (meaning us) must set forth the example given to us by Christ. We cannot disassociate ourselves from the not so righteous or constantly condemn someone's actions from the pulpit (speaking of personal life and not about a madman like Amin). We have to be willing to sacrifice our time to convey Christ's image in all parts of our lives. Not necessarily by preaching, that usually serves to disperse people, but by using that time for the betterment of the community. Then perhaps more people would see an answer to their wanderings for inner peace and trust in the hereafter. We cannot be afraid of the streets when a person's soul is at stake. Forgive me if I make the solution sound simple, because everyone knows that giving up on ourselves is about all that is easy in this life.

I see a world ahead only as bright as the light of Christ we let shine, so let us not be too proud to bruise our knees from prayer, or have stiff backs from helping a neighbor. Share a greeting, 'cause noses stuck in the air only show people ashamed of their surroundings. Are you ashamed of yours?

MARK VONDER EMBSE

NEWS & VIEWS: 354 **CORRESPONDENCE:** 355
EDITORIALS: 355
EXPORTING DEATH TO IRELAND: *Desmond Fisher* 356
TWO CHRISTS IN ITALY: *Margo Hammond* 358
WASHINGTON REPORT: Past Imperfect, Future Imperative: *Frank Getlein* 359
THREE TALES OF A CITY: *Peter Steinfels* 360
COMMUNION IN THE HAND: *Abigail McCarthy* 362
CATHOLIC ANNULMENTS: A DEHUMANIZING PROCESS: *Stephen J. Kelleher* 363
THE SCREEN: *Colin L. Westerbeck, Jr.* 369
THE STAGE: *Gerald Weales* 370
STAYING IN TOUCH: *Saul Maloff* 371
CHEERS FOR CHEEVER: *Janet Groth* 374
BOOKS: *Sara C. Charles, Burne Hogarth, John B. Sheerin, John Druska, Stu Cohen,* 376
ILLUSTRATIONS: *front cover, seventeenth century Puritan family*

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232 MADISON AVE., NEW YORK, N.Y. 10016
Telephone: (212) MU 3-2042

A review of Public Affairs, Literature and the Arts. Second class postage paid at New York, N.Y. Printed in the USA and published bi-weekly by Commonweal Publishing Co. *Copyright © 1977 Commonweal Publishing Co., Inc.**—US and Canada: $17 a year. Foreign $19. Single copy 75c. Special two-year rate $29.50. Foreign $33.50.*

Commonweal is indexed in Reader's Guide to Periodical Literature, Catholic Periodical Index, and Book Review Digest. Microfilms from Vol. 1, 1924, to date available through University Microfilms; 300 N. Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, Mich. 48106. National Serials Data Program No.: ISSN 0010-3330.

ROME VS. MEMPHIS

After the Spanish-American War, a priest of the Diocese of Hartford, Conn., Bonaventure F. Broderick, was tapped by the auditor of the Apostolic Delegation in Washington to accompany him to Havana on matters concerning relations between the United States government and the Catholic Church in Cuba. In due course Broderick became an auxiliary bishop of Havana, and was fulfilling an honorable and meritorious mission until he fell out of blessing with a new Apostolic Delegate to Cuba, an American archbishop from New Orleans. Broderick was returned to the United States, where he found himself without see or duties. In correspondence with the Pope, then Pius X, Broderick pointed out that this situation of a bishop being without a place to go or work to do would be viewed as a scandal in Catholic America. The Pope interpreted Broderick's attempt to stress the implications of his lack of assignment as a threat to cause scandal. Rome cut him adrift. Broderick was reduced to pumping gas for a living in a small New York upstate community, until thirty years later when he was relocated and the problem straightened out, with Cardinal Spellman's mediatorship and Rome's blessing. Broderick died in 1943 as an Auxiliary Bishop of New York.

Analogies are never exact things, and one man's fate is not necessarily another's. Nevertheless, we cannot help fearing that there is something of the communications breakdown, and potential for human tragedy, of the Broderick case in the controversy that has built to such tense proportions between Cardinal James Knox of the Vatican's Congregation for Sacraments and Divine Worship and Bishop Carroll T. Dozier of the Diocese of Memphis, Tenn. At issue, of course, in the contention between the two

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are Bishop Dozier's reconciliation liturgies of last Advent, during the conducting of which some 13,500 persons were offered general absolution and communion. Cardinal Knox has unleashed an official public criticism of Dozier; Dozier, in turn, certain that his liturgies have been grossly misinterpreted by the Curia official, has charged Knox with using "very loose wordage in a form of a public reprimand which could ruin my career with my fellow bishops." In point of fact, the personal stakes are much higher for Dozier; as with Broderick, his career in the Church could be ruined.

It is no secret where our sympathies lie in this quarrel between Rome and Memphis, and thus—should the matter come to denouement—which of the two contending principals we would prefer to see end up pumping gas. We believe that Cardinal Knox has not only distorted what took place in the Memphis diocese, but also that he is imposing a much too narrow concept of what is possible under the new (1972) pastoral norms for general sacramental absolution, the norms under which Bishop Dozier acted. As the American Liturgical Conference said in a recent open letter to the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, "The central pastoral issue is not 'Under what circumstances may general absolution be given?' but 'How can people and ministers responsibly seek reconciliation and healing in their daily lives?'" In this context, there can be no doubt about the responsible character of the two Memphis liturgies, nor any question about their salutary effects. They proceeded on five months of careful preparation, on broad consultation with brother bishops—and they produced strong positive results. Twenty-one of the diocese's twenty-nine parishes reported substantial increases in individual confessions during Holy Week this year, in some cases these being more than double that of the year before.

These facts make strong debater's points on Dozier's side. However, the controversy between Rome and Memphis has developed to the stage where debater's points may not only be meaningless, but could boomerang. Cardinal Knox has taken a public stand, and he is not likely to back down from it. Indeed, if he is like some other men, he could even be goaded into more drastic action, unwise and unjust, the consequences of which could be enormously greater than any to date. Rome has been known to act impulsively before.

In the light of that worry, if no other, we would opt for a deescalation of rhetoric, including in Memphis. At the same time, we would like to see some stronger indications, if only symbolic, from the American hierarchy that they intend to stand by their colleague in Memphis. Making full allowance for the workings of journalistic license, it is disconcerting that the *National Catholic Reporter* should be able to interpret as "sniping" some statements about Dozier by the president of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops, Archbishop Joseph Bernardin; similarly, it is dismaying that the *New York Times* should be able to speak of Dozier's presence among U.S. bishops at last month's hierarchy meeting in Chicago as one of "relative solitude."

Nothing would testify more strongly to the seriousness and backbone of the U.S. hierarchy than for them to take a closer look at what Dozier did in Memphis last Advent and, where appropriate, for them to do likewise within their authority as bishops of dioceses. If any need encouragement, let them reflect on some words of the earlier-cited Liturgical Conference statement: "The present silences of the general law presumably leave some freedom for the local bishop to adapt the rites of reconciliation according to his considered assessment of the special pastoral needs of his diocese. This freedom of adaptation is necessary if the bishop is to fulfill his role as a pastor, a discerner of the Spirit among the people he serves. To restrict a bishop's freedom of responsible pastoral adaptation to the point where, in effect, he has no such freedom is to reduce him to the status of an agent for higher ecclesiastical authorities or peers whom he cannot readily convince of his people's needs. This would be quite contrary to that ancient theological tradition in the Church which sees the bishop as a legitimate pastor precisely in virtue of his ordination to that office."

The clash between Rome and Memphis is joined on issues inherent in those sentences, so that what is involved ultimately in the current contention is more than a man in Tennessee and any cause of his. Rather, it is the integrity, the freedom, the pastoral authority of each and every individual Ordinary of a diocese. If this is not enough to make the American bishops react courageously and supportively to the Dozier initiatives—and his plight, should it come to that—then they are without respect.

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GUNS AND MONEY

EXPORTING DEATH TO IRELAND

"Almost 1,800 people have been killed in Northern Ireland since 1969," wrote the *New York Times* in commenting on the St. Patrick's Day visit to President Carter by Dr. Garrett FitzGerald, the Irish Foreign Minister. "The suffering is incalculable."

Irish people might wonder what the statistic means to the average American reader. When he learns the weekend road accident toll for the whole of the U.S.

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or the crime statistics from San Francisco, what impact does the figure of 1,800 deaths make on him?

The reality might be brought home by converting it into comparable American terms. Out of the U.S. population of 200 million, the proportionate death total would be 240,000. That sort of calculation gives some idea of the dimensions of the Northern Ireland tragedy.

Many of those deaths were caused by the stupidity, or—to put it as mildly as possible—by the ignorance of Americans themselves. For it was they who supplied the money that bought the guns that caused those deaths.

No one knows exactly how many illegal weapons are brought in from North America, and particularly the U.S., to Northern Ireland. No one knows exactly who brings them or how. But the experts—the security authorities in Britain and Ireland—believe that at least six and perhaps as many as eight of every ten illegal weapons brought into Ireland came from the U.S. Most of them were probably bought out of funds donated, in large part, by unsuspecting or naive Americans in the belief that the money was being used to relieve the sufferings of innocent victims in Northern Ireland.

Time and again, Irish politicians have warned their American opposite numbers about the traffic. Time and again, they have pleaded with political leaders to be more careful about what they say on Northern Ireland because their statements can give a wrong impression and result in loss of lives. Dr. FitzGerald's mission in mid-March was the latest attempt to drive home the lesson.

In Ireland, his journey was regarded as a success—at least up to a point. Irish people, North and South, were pleased that he appeared to have cleared up President Carter's woolly thinking on the problem and enlisted his active support in stopping the illegal arms traffic.

They were even more pleased that he got the four leading "Irish" politicians in the U.S.—Senators Edward Kennedy and Daniel Moynihan, House Speaker 'Tip' O'Neill and Governor Hugh Carey of New York—to abandon what had seemed to be their sneaking regard for the IRA. On St. Patrick's Day, they issued a joint statement calling on Americans "to renounce any action that promotes the current violence or provides support or encouragement for organizations engaged in violence." In late April, Governor Carey returned to the subject at a widely-publicized lecture and press conference in Dublin, during which he branded the two principal factions of the IRA as "the Irish killers" and "the Irish Marxists."

Finally, Dr. FitzGerald seemed to have got home to some of the Irish-American organizations that, in many cases, their well-intentioned donations were going straight to the IRA. And if some of them sought to justify the violence by imagining the victims to be British soldiers, he advised them bluntly that they were far wrong: over 90 percent of those killed have been civilians.

So far, so good. The overwhelming majority of the Irish people, North and South, who are both disgusted with and ashamed of the continuing killings, felt the Minister had done a good job. The more knowledgeable were less inclined to cheer. Their view was that, despite Dr. FitzGerald's best efforts, the illegal arms traffic from the U.S. to Northern Ireland would not be cut down appreciably as long as guns and ammunition could be bought across the counter in many states. One source estimated that some 40 percent of the guns brought into Northern Ireland from North America are obtained in this way.

Part of the trouble is that it has proved impossible to trace how the arms reach Northern Ireland. In the last few years, especially, substantial quantities of guns and ammunition have been captured. Some of it was found in ships and boats, especially in the narrow channel between Scotland and Northern Ireland. Police on both sides of the Border have captured some big caches.

But there seems to be no one special route from the U.S. to Ireland. Security experts believe that arms and ammunition are smuggled through in small lots, one handgun or rifle or even separate pieces of rifle or submachine gun at a time. The Armalite rifle, the favorite weapon of the Provisional IRA sniper, when fitted with a telescopic sight, is particularly easy to smuggle. It is light and it can be broken down into separate bits easy to conceal. With millions of American tourists coming into Britain and Ireland every year, it is physically easy, though decidedly risky, to bring in the pieces in a suitcase. Goods containers, cabins and even coffins containing corpses for burial in Ireland, are said to be some of the hiding-places used.

There is little optimism, either, that the Irish-American organizations which have been collecting money will completely cease their activities. Many of their members have a romantic view of the nature of the violence in Northern Ireland. They see it in simple terms of finishing off the job of winning Irish independence left unfinished in 1922. They are not convinced by the official Irish government view that it would be dangerous in the extreme if the British were to withdraw precipitately from Northern Ireland and that a united Ireland won by force would not be worth the winning.

What the Irish government hopes for is that, by a combination of methods, the U.S. authorities will be able to reduce the traffic to the point where the IRA will begin to feel the pinch. At present, the Provisionals have all the arms they want: the best estimates suggest that in Belfast alone the extremists of all kinds have enough to keep up the present level of fighting for years. But if the traffic could be significantly reduced

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and the discovery of arms caches stepped up, the situation would be better. Apart from tracing and stopping the arms leaving the U.S., the Dublin government is hoping that the American authorities will stop the traffic at the source. They would like to see Irish-American organizations, which continue to subscribe money for Northern Ireland through dubious channels, harassed and, if possible, prosecuted on some count. There was considerable satisfaction in Dublin with the move against Noraid, the chief collection agency for funds for Northern Ireland. It was taken to court by the Department of Justice for failing to complete its registration forms and supply all the information required. Noraid is reported now to be bringing a suit against the Justice Department alleging harassment of members. Dublin Ministers believe that any association with court cases will frighten off some contributors who would fear police and federal agencies' interest in their activities and others who would for the first time begin to suspect the organizations' *bona fides.*

More cynically, perhaps, the hope in Dublin is that those who have supported the IRA because they seemed to be fighting for a worthy cause will begin to tire of keeping up the financing of what appears to be a lost one. Today, the Provisional IRA seems to be no nearer its goal. After all the killing and all the destruction of property, the Northern Ireland problem seems further away from a solution than ever. DESMOND FISHER

(Desmond Fisher, Director of Broadcasting Developments for Radio Telefis Eireann, *is* Commonweal's *regular correspondent in Ireland.)*

Two Christs In Italy

Italians, always fond of dialectics, were recently presented with a curious confrontation. Jesus Christ versus Jesus Christ. Or more precisely *Jesus of Nazareth,* a colossal film by Franco (*Romeo and Juliet, Zabriskie Point*) Zeffirelli versus the Christ of actor-author Dario Fo's *Mistero Buffo,* a series of Biblical tales based on the popular traditions of the Middle Ages. Both were the subject of recent television specials: the Zeffirelli film was presented in a five-part series from March 27-April 24. Fo's *Mistero Buffo* (Comic Mystery) was shown April 22 and 29.

After the first installment of Zeffirelli's *Jesus of Nazareth*—seen by an estimated 22 million viewers—the film received an immediate benediction from the Vatican. "Zeffirelli has finally given us an authentic Jesus, a sweet Mary and Peter sculpted from a rock," wrote *L'Osservatore Romano.* It was a film, according to the Vatican newspaper, that was "capable of translating in images the sublime dimension of faith."

The film critics, however, were not so generous. Attacking its traditionalism, the film was labeled conservative, reactionary and sentimental. Zeffirelli's Jesus, wrote one critic, looks like "the statues on the altars of country churches." Others called it a mixture of Cecil B. DeMille and illustrations in a Sunday School catechism. The criticisms became so intense, in fact, that a journalist on the front page of the prestigious *Corriere delle Sera* claimed that it had simply become *chic* to pan the film. "Whoever dares to admit that he enjoyed the Sunday shows is accused of being *kitsch,* of loving graven images, of joining the reactionary followers of Monsignor Lefebvre or of indulging, as with *Jesus Christ Superstar,* in another wave of religious consumerism."

The "other" Christ has become just as controversial, but for exactly the opposite reason. The Christ of Dario Fo is far from being the catechism figure of Zeffirelli. In the tradition of the *Commedia dell'arte* with its grotesque characters and ribald language, *Mistero Buffo* presents the Gospel as it was seen by the common people of the Middle Ages. The wedding feast of Cana (a scene Zeffirelli leaves out entirely) is described by an elated drunk, the resurrection of Lazarus by a pick-pocket taking advantage of the crowd gathered to witness the miracle. Using a Lombardian dialect based on the peasant language of the 1400s, Fo creates a Christ who drinks, laughs, eats and dances and talks of the here and now more than the beyond; a Mary, a peasant woman, who screams like a banshee and curses the Angel Gabriel when she sees her son on the cross: and a Lazarus who rises from the dead, not wrapped in a fresh white sheet, but already beginning to rot. This is how, says Dario Fo, the common people saw the Gospel.

Fo himself has been the subject of controversy for some time. Expelled more than 14 years ago from national television—then controlled by the Christian Democratic Party—for making political comments on a variety show, he has also been at odds with the Italian Communist Party for his unorthodox, far-leftist views. Occupying a building—dubbed the Palazzina Liberty—in Milan, Fo broke with the "bourgeois theater" and succeeded in constructing an independent theater company which he brought into local cultural centers (Case del Popolo), Chambers of Labor, occupied factories and universities as well as to France, Greece and West Germany. Fourteen years later—and after a reform of the state-controlled television created two channels, one controlled by the Christian Democrats, the other by the Socialists—Dario Fo has returned.

What has been the reaction to his "other" Christ? The judgment of the Vatican has been unequivocal. Dedicating five columns to *Mistero Buffo, L'Osservatore Romano* spoke of ideological violence, claiming that the

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play was an affront to the conscience of Catholics. Following up the first installment of Fo's play, the Cardinal Vicar of Rome, Ugo Poletti, sent a telegram to Prime Minister Giulio Andreotti protesting what he called a "blasphemous and anticultural transmission." Zeffirelli, himself a Florentine Catholic, echoed the sentiments of the hierarchy attacking the play as vulgar and anticlerical. Not all Italian Catholics, however, found the play offensive. The *Comunità di base* (a Catholic social action group) sent a telegram of solidarity to Fo which alluded to the scene in *Mistero Buffo* satirizing Pope Boniface VIII: "It helps us understand how the common people have judged the Church of Christ when that Church has yielded to the temptation of power."

The reviews? *La Repubblica,* a Socialist-leaning daily, hailed the play as "one of the most extraordinary pieces of comic popular theater that can be admired in Europe today." "An enormous applause, an impetuous and profound applause, is echoing along the entire peninsula," wrote the television critic for *Corriere della Sera,* "an applause coming from the common people (and much of Italy is made up of common people)."

Meanwhile the "case of Dario Fo" as well as that of Zeffirelli's *Jesus* have become political issues. The Christian Democratic Party is calling for the censorship of Fo (who is scheduled to present 15 television shows this spring and next fall). The other parties from the Liberals ("Pluralism does not mean saying the same thing with different voices, but being able to say something different like the theater of Dario Fo") to the Communists ("We too have been affronted by certain television transmissions without, however, resorting to a call for censorship") have condemned any attempts to ban Fo again from national television. The Italian Communists, on the other hand, are calling for an investigation into the amount of state funds that were spent to air *Jesus of Nazareth,* "an operation of such low artistic-cultural merit and of such pressing clerical importance."

"Cultural and political provincialism," concluded Paolo Grassi, former president of the Scala opera house, now president of the Italian RAI-TV, "ridiculous factionalism: first a pseudo-political gathering of forces for and against Zeffirelli's *Jesus,* then opposition between *Jesus* and *Mistero Buffo* as if we were closing ranks in two trenches. . . ." MARGO HAMMOND

(Margo Hammond, who writes regularly for the Christian Science Monitor *and other publications, is an American freelance writer currently based in Rome.)*

WASHINGTON REPORT

PAST IMPERFECT, FUTURE IMPERATIVE

You expected The Monster to act like The Monster and he did, right on schedule and in prime time. What you didn't expect was for The Pardoner to surface here the next day and yet once more defend The Pardon, explaining that The Monster's television appearances have proved once more how right he, the Pardoner, was to hand over The Pardon, payable in thirty days, to the man who gave him his job.

Ford's explanation this time for turning loose the master criminal while the subordinate members of the gang were jailed had a special quality of absurdity. In the realm of the intellect, if that phrase applies anywhere in the whole rotten business, Ford is now imitating Chevy Chase imitating Ford. Next time out he'll wrestle himself to the ground. "The more I see of Nixon's replies," Ford said, "the more I'm convinced that my reason for the pardon has been validated." Had he not pardoned the man who made him president, not only would he have been guilty of base ingratitude (a thought Ford did not say) but he would have had to devote a quarter of his time in the White House "listening to lawyers arguing about the tapes and so on" rather than concentrating his efforts on pressing government problems like the economy.

In the first place, if Ford was concentrating on the economy, in view of the results of his concentration it would have been a good idea for him to have something else to think about. In the second, what he was concentrating on, of course, was the handling of the *Mayaguez* affair, in which he came on like Chevy Chase gone berserk and heavily armed. And in the third, had he allowed justice to take its course, he would not really have had to spend all that time in arguments about the tapes. All he had to do was obey the ruling of the Supreme Court and turn the tapes over to the proper authorities asking for them. How many lawyers arguing did he have to listen to before deciding to give the incriminating tapes to the criminal incriminated on them? My own guess is, One: Al Haig, who said, Jerry, send the tapes to San Clemente, or I release the evidence that you promised Pardon in return for the job, a federal offense and an impeachable one and as long as you're up, please pass me NATO.

As to Ford's benefactor, he continued his impersonation of Emil Jannings in the last scene of *The Blue Angel.* There were other strains, a touch, for example, of Edward G. Robinson as Little Caesar ordering the rub-out of Eddie, a gang member about to turn honest

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and talk. In the movie, the touring car comes around the corner as Eddie walks up the steps of the church: the familiar rat-a-tat-tat, Eddie sprawls dead on the steps and there's a flat cut to Eddie's very elaborate funeral, presided over by Robinson: the mob admires the flowers, the "Good Luck, Pal," horseshoe of roses and the rest; Robinson puffs on his one-dollar Havana and says, "Yeah, too bad Eddie couldn't be here, he always liked a good funeral." This was exactly the spirit in which Nixon dealt with Dr. Ellsberg, whose psychiatrist's office the Nixon hit men, Hunt and Liddy, burglarized in the hope of finding and peddling material discrediting to the man who had released the Pentagon Papers. Nixon even used the gangster movie word, "punk," to describe Ellsberg. As he sank into renewed fantasies about "getting" his enemies, particularly Ellsberg, he became more and more a caricature of a kind of party imitation of Robinson in the role.

The movies, in fact, provided one more key, if one is still needed. David Frost, the interviewer, brought up the question of whether the Monster's having just had two screenings of *Patton* influenced him in making the secret, un-Constitutional and, in the event, utterly disastrous invasion—or "incursion"—of Cambodia. No, of course not, said the Monster, and went on to make two points: *Patton* is "an interesting movie, I recommend it . . . it's like Tolstoy's *War and Peace*." And, "Well, I've seen *The Sound of Music* twice and it hasn't made me a writer, either." Aside from the baffling assumption that if watching Patton might lead him to invade a neutral country, watching Julie Andrews as the Baroness von Trapp might make him a writer—he evidently thinks writing is a form of singing, another gangster conclusion, since the mobster who sings to the police is asked to sign a written confession—aside from that, it is staggering to hear the movie *Patton* compared, even remotely, to *War and Peace*; Nixon, in fact, went on to compare the movie to "any Tolstoyan novel," specifically to *Anna Karenina* in addition to *War and Peace*. Can Nixon have read "any Tolstoyan novel"? Unlikely. But the comparison is instructive. So, too, is the match between two Nixonian favorites in the White House screening room: *Patton* and *The Sound of Music*: militaristic rigor and vigor on the one hand, sentimental claptrap on the other. Where have we seen that combination before in an embattled, self-pitying national leader? Hitler comes to mind.

Hitler comes to mind, too, of course, in the very heart of the third-Frost-Nixon freak show. At last the Master Criminal let it all hang out: "When the president does it (illegal acts), it's not illegal." Precisely: I am the state and the law and the Constitution. For reasons not clear at all, The Monster seemed to draw the line at murder: more accurately, perhaps, he seemed to draw the line at publicly claiming the right to murder as inherent in the presidency. But burglary, breaking and entering, wiretapping and mail-opening, all the elements of the infamous Huston plan approved by Nixon, these were indeed rights inherent in the presidency, please pass the pry-bar and get ready with the nitro, Bugsy.

The gain in this admission was not the news that Nixon as president acted as a gangster: we knew that:

THREE TALES OF A CITY

PETER STEINFELS

MY TALE this week is of young adults and unemployment and government and crime and the spirit of the times. It begins not once but three times. It ends, I believe, at one point. I ask your patience.

I begin (the first time) in that special land so many of us inhabit so much. I mean of course the *New York Times*. One of its brighter citizens, Mr. John Leonard, wrote a plaintive column there, which in itself does not distinguish this column from all his other columns, Mr. Leonard being the very soul of melancholy these days. In this particular plaintive column, however, Mr. Leonard revealed that he has not only a psyche and a family and a cat and a television set but a *house*. Not a castle-in-the-air hovering over his typewriter but a thirteen-and-a-half foot-wide Westside Manhattan house, complete with a stoop and a flowerbox and attached to a Westside Manhattan street, a sidewalk and (here the trouble begins) some slobs. The slobs did not come with the house. The slobs came with a nearby junior high school. They occupy Mr. Leonard's stoop. They incrust it with whatever cardboard they do not eat for lunch. They bombard his sidewalk with pop bottles.

Mr. Leonard is understandably distressed. He remonstrates with the slobs. He tells them "of the fouling of one's nest, reciprocity, the environment, John Rawls' Theory of Justice, the social contract, and the Strategic Air Command." Alas. "It was like trying to reason with the sullen pips on a stack of dominoes. Their resentment was made of bone."

There are the usual recourses. The police. School officials. Private measures. Mr. Leonard decides on the latter— a garden hose with which he will douse the slobs. Besides this primitive chemical warfare, he also wields publicity. His plaintive column (we find out later) seems to bring respite.

There is a political dimension, however, to this sidewalk drama. Complaining of the slobs, Mr. Leo-

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but that he saw himself as a gangster and saw gangsterism as not merely justified by the situation but even dictated by it: had he acted as an honest man, he would have failed in his duty to the country. He went on, of course, to compare himself to Lincoln and the dissent over the American war against the Indochinese to the Civil War, which, interestingly, he referred to as "The War Between the States." When you think of it, it is astounding that he has not yet compared himself to Jesus Christ, sacrificed for the sins of the world, yet a willing victim for the cause is so important. That's probably coming up, if not in the final broadcasts, certainly in The Book.

Another aspect of Nixon's defense of gangsterism in the cause of Nixonism is its throwback to The Pardoner during his head days as successor. Freed from the necessity to listen to lawyers arguing about the tapes due to his statesmanlike delivery of the pardon on schedule, the great government problem that Ford put his giant brain to work on was the problem of government agents in the FBI, the CIA and elsewhere committing burglary, interfering with the U.S. mails—has anyone ever studied the relation between the mucking up of the mails by those two agencies and the overall deterioration of the mail service? Is it possible that if the so-called "intelligence" agencies paid their own way, the mails would easily make a profit instead of losing money all the time?—and all that petty crime. Ford's solution? A logical extension of Nixon as Louis XIV: we stop government crimes against citizens by declaring such crimes not to be crimes anymore. You can take the White House away from Nixon, but you can't take Nixon out of the White House as long as it is run by his own chosen instrument for the continuation of Nixonism by other means.

Well, they're both gone now, the Monster and the Pardoner, but, as the Highland Ballad asks plaintively, Will he no come back again? Yes, of course, he'll come back again. Nixon is an eternal anti-verity: Cf. Tartuffe, Widmerpool in *A Dance to the Music of Time*, Foma Fomitch in Dostoyevski's *A Friend of the Family*. There'll aways be a Nixon and by all odds every once in a while one of them will make it to the top. What to do? On the record of the Big Broadcasts now concluding, a couple of easy things, no Amendment to the Constitution required. Let Congress, when the next crook moves himself toward impeachment, carry forward the process: resignation is not enough: impeach him, convict him in the Senate and throw him in the slammer, at least overnight. Moreover, if the crook president has selected a crook vice-president—like calls to like—when the crook vice-president is forced to resign, don't let the crook president appoint the successor vice-president: make advise and consent really work and get in the office someone indebted to Congress for the job, not to the crook president, let alone to a military climber like Al Haig. At the same time, throw the crook vice president in the cooler for a bit. In the old days, people like Nixon and Agnew took what was called "the honorable way out" by shooting themselves. Nowadays crooks lack honor and have to be held for downs. That is the overwhelming lesson of the Nixon show.

FRANK GETLEIN

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nard feels pressed to mention that he is a "middle-class liberal." Then he mentions it again. He speaks of "feeling so guilty . . . I can't even cope with the usurpation of a stoop." He speaks of "apologizing" to the slobs and he reminds himself of his motley of mortgages, his hard work and debts, his immigrant forebears. The war between property-owners and juvenile trespassers is ancient, but here is something distinctly new. Did Farmer Macgregor, upon throwing Peter Rabbit out of the garden, chew over the cud of his political allegiances?

Begin again. Story two. Also from the land of the *New York Times*, and occurring about two days after John Leonard's plaintive column. This time an article by Marjory Potts. Ms. Potts is riding the subway and fantasizing. She is fantasizing about the pearl-handled pistol she imagines holding ready for any attackers. She is remembering the peace and warmth of her home and her rage at news reports of mothers murdered before their children's eyes; she is recalling the beating heart and unwanted hatred with which she reads of "hideous crimes day in and day out." Ms. Potts fantasizes "castration for rapists, speedy trials for quick executions, an end to protection for kid punks." As she walks from the train to her Brooklyn home, two scrawny fourteen-year-olds make obscene remarks to her—and she wants to smash their heads together.

Marjory Potts, it should be noted, is director of public information for the Legal Aid Society.

"What is happening to me?" she writes. "My direction was always very clear. . . . I believe in the nobility of man. . . . At various times in my life, I was a member of the S.D.S., the A.D.A., the N.A.A.C.P., CORE, the A.C.L.U. I went on Freedom Rides. I Banned the Bomb."

Ms. Potts still anguishes over the victim of legal injustice, but she is shaken and torn. She speaks of "loss of faith" and clashes with her husband, who "clings to reason."

Mr. Leonard's account, on the face of it, is trivial; Ms. Potts's grave. Both are poignant and ring true. They represent a turning of the times, a million small rages against public disorder, crime, pornography. A million small rages, for "middle-class liberals," against themselves and their political beliefs.

(Continued on page 382)

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COMMUNION IN THE HAND

ABIGAIL McCARTHY

It is May as I write and each Sunday I watch in some wonder as one small first communicant goes into the sanctuary with his or her parents —sometimes trailed by toddler sisters and brothers—receives communion and returns to a front pew while the rest of the congregation converges on the altar. It is all so simply and quietly done. The little girls, who seem very tiny to me, sometimes wear veils but their white dresses are simple; the boys have no set attire. I am told that the time is decided by their parents and the pastor.

We have come a long way. I remember a time when parents had nothing to say about the matter and only much older children were admitted to communion. Our bishops and priests were slow to accept the admonition of Pius X that little children of the age of "reason" were as worthy as anyone else. The age of reception crept very slowly downward. I look at the picture of my mother in the family album—she stands there stiffly, happily, in wonderful white hairbows and a dress all embroidery and lace insertions, holding the decorated first communion candle in one hand—and I know she must have been at least twelve years old then.

I myself was nine and in the fourth grade. That must have been the level decreed by our bishop as safe. Our strenuous preparation lasted all through the school year. There were hymns and prayers to learn by heart. There were stories to learn about the martyrs of the Blessed Sacrament—Roman boys with names like Pancratius and Tarcisius, stoic and brave, who died rather than expose the sacrament to pagan profanation. There were faintly gruesome stories of hosts which turned into bleeding flesh—I do not remember why but the visual image lingers. There were the lives of the saints whose high standards of purity we were to seek to attain like Agnes, the little lamb of God, and Aloysius (to whom I never could warm).

There were the hours of practice in the dark, empty, echoing church. We filed into the pews—girls first, boys in back—stood, and then genuflected all together at the resounding snap of the rubber band on Sister Leonilla's prayer book. Sometimes Sister Edwardine, the music teacher, came over from the convent to play the communion music so that our practice would come closer to the reality of the approaching great day. As she played softly we went on with the rehearsal, advancing two by two carefully matched in size to the priedieux just inside the altar rail, pretended to slip our hands under starched linen altar cloths, spread them beneath our chins, "received," then rising together, facing simultaneously one to the right, one to the left, then to the back of the church before stepping carefully down the steps which led from the sanctuary. Oh, the terror of stumbling or falling on *the* day!

Instructions in purple hectograph ink were pulled laboriously off the duplicating jelly by girls under Sister's direction and sent home to our parents. Dress and sleeve lengths were specified for the girls. Dark blue suits, dark blue ties and white, white shirts were prescribed for the boys. We were to wear the same kind of flowers and carry the same kind of candles, all ordered by the Sisters; our parents were to see the white prayer books and rosaries which were suggested as suitable First Communion gifts. Water taps were to be taped the night before, and parents were to be careful that we had no breakfast.

As it drew on to May we grew increasingly anxious about important details. We knew what to do if Father fumbled, and a host dropped. Our Pastor was a hasty man and given to irritable quick moves. We had all seen him quickly consume a dropped host and cover the spot with a linen cloth lest a crumb should remain on the floor. We knew he himself would wash the spot later with a cloth used only for the altar. But what if the host stuck to the roof of our mouth? (We had heard that the fragile wafers of that time often did.) Or touched your teeth? Or, horror of horrors, became caught in your throat? I do not remember the remedies; I only know that whatever the eventuality we were never, *never* to touch the host with our fingers. In our advancing fervor it is quite possible that we thought ourselves ready to emulate Pancratius and Tarcisius by choking to death if necessary.

Of the day itself I remember trying hard to feel it the most important day of my life, but of being unhappily aware of the lilies of the valley skewered tightly into my hair by Sister Superior. And I remember Carlie Schmidt sobbing with his head on the desk as the rest of us filed out of the classroom. Unthinkable, but Carlie had broken his fast—he had taken a drink from the school fountain! More than an hour before Mass, but unthinkable all the same.

Behind our obsession with physical detail lay a literal awe of the host—the Blessed Sacrament. This awe had been fueled and fostered by the sight of the "Altar of Repose" on Holy Thursday, a side altar swathed in tiers of silk and tulle, adorned with lilies and ferns; fueled, too, by Forty Hours' Devotion, which ended with our walking in procession, scattering

(Continued on page 383)

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CATHOLIC ANNULMENTS: A DEHUMANIZING PROCESS

STEPHEN J. KELLEHER

Lifting excommunication for divorce and remarriage is not enough

On May 5, 1977, the Catholic bishops of the United States voted 231-8 to abolish the penalty of excommunication for Catholics who have been divorced and remarried. This vote will be effective if and when it is approved by the Pope. The abolition of the penalty of excommunication will not give divorced persons the right to remarry. It will not give divorced and remarried Catholics the right to receive Holy Communion. At best, the abolition of the penalty—which penalty exists only in the United States—is a gesture of compassion. It does not effect anything substantive in the lives of divorced and remarried Catholics.

In the aftermath of the vote, some bishops pointed out that marriage tribunals have improved a great deal in the past seven years and will continue to improve. These statements of the bishops are clearly misleading. They could easily raise false hopes in the minds of divorced Catholics who have remarried or who desire or intend to remarry. The bleakness of the situation is not relieved by the May 5 vote or by the optimism of some bishops about the value and effectiveness of tribunals.

MONSIGNOR STEPHEN J. KELLEHER, *author of* Divorce and Remarriage for Catholics? *(Doubleday, 1973), was a member of the Marriage Tribunal of the Archdiocese of New York from 1943 to 1968. From 1967 to 1973 he was Consultor to the Pontifical Commission for the revision of the Code of Canon Law and adviser to the Canon Law Committee of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops. He served as chairman of the Committee of the Canon Law Society of America which authored "The American Procedural Norms," approved by the U.S. Bishops and the Pope and in effect since July, 1970, which have led to a 20-fold increase in annulments.*

Although at least one thousand priests in the United States work full-time or part-time in the 166 Catholic Church diocesan tribunals which grant or deny annulments of marriages, the Canon Law Society of America has made it clear in its committee reports over the past three years that the tribunal will never be able to cope with the anguishing problem of the millions of separated and divorced Catholics who have been or who desire to be remarried, of the millions of single Catholics who have been married to, or who desire to marry, divorced persons.

The fact is that, even with the already vastly improved tribunal performance, the number of civil divorces among Catholics each year far surpasses the number of annulments being granted by tribunals. In 1975, at least 120,000 civil divorces were granted to Catholics in the United States. In the same year, there were at most 15,000 Church annulments. We began 1976 with a minimum backlog of 105,000 divorced couples from 1975. And what about 1974 and the years beyond?

This article will concern itself principally with the fact that, in the processing of a very large majority of annulment cases, there is an intrinsic inhumaneness and an inherent lack of Christian compassion. There is a dehumanization, a depersonalization, of one or both parties to a marriage being considered for an annulment under existing substantive and procedural law.

In at least eighty percent of tribunal cases in the United States, the alleged basis or reason for the annulment is that, on the day they married, one or both parties in the marriage were so emotionally, mentally and/or volitionally impaired that they were

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simply incapable of marriage. In the granting of an annulment, a person is declared to have been incapable of marriage on the day he or she married.

The question may be asked whether, in their affirmative annulment decisions, tribunals make a judgment that the incapacity to marry is permanent or temporary. Some decisions concerning incapacity are so worded that they lead almost inescapably to the conclusion that the incapacity is permanent. In practice, however, very rarely, if ever, is a person who is judged to have been incapable of marriage on the day of his or her marriage actually prohibited from remarrying. Usually, if such a person desires to remarry in the Catholic Church, he or she will be told that a psychiatric examination is mandatory before another marriage may take place. Almost invariably, the examining psychiatrist will say he is unable to conclude that the person is, at the time of the examination, incapable of marriage. Hence, he or she will be permitted to remarry. If the psychiatrist concluded that the person is incapable, a request for another opinion would be in order.

Psychiatrists and psychologists play a prominent role in the processing of tribunal annulment cases. Aside from their specific tribunal role, these professionals are making great contributions to our knowledge of the meaning and values of marriage, of the dynamics which may make and keep a marriage alive or which may pave the way to its death. In therapy, these professionals try to help persons grow in maturity, have a substantive respect for themselves, and, within that framework, to try to live in peace with other persons. Therapy may lead a person to decide to marry or not to marry, to grow in marriage or to decide that his or her marriage is a meaningless, deadening experience.

My specific point here is that the use of this professional knowledge and experience for the immediate and direct purpose of deciding that a marriage never existed, because of the incapacity of one or both parties to marry, is the opposite of therapeutic. I find it difficult to conceive that a therapist in private practice would find it of value to tell a person that he or she was never married. He would perhaps help the person come to a decision as to whether or not this is so and would then leave the person free to decide what, if anything, he or she can and will do about it. I find it difficult to conceive that a therapist can say in retrospect that he is sure either or both were simply and unequivocally unable to succeed in their marriage when they exchanged their marital vows. It is my view that psychiatrists and psychologists are making a mistake in being part of the tribunal process because, when an annulment is granted, they are concurring in the conclusion that a marriage was never alive.

When persons come to the tribunal they do not come for psychiatric or psychological therapy. They come to have the Church, through the tribunal, declare what they already know: that their marriage is dead, they are free to remarry and to continue to receive Holy Communion. They submit to psychiatric examinations and psychological testing because they know that this is presently the only way they can be declared free to remarry in the Church.

It would be bad enough if psychiatrists and psychologists were the tribunal judges. At least we would have decisions by professionals rooted in the application of professional findings. If the tribunal is to continue in existence, psychiatrists and psychologists, women as well as men, should be designated in law as the tribunal judges. But, in the present law, it is stated unqualifiedly that the psychiatric and psychological experts are not the judges.

It seems to me that these decisions involving the alleged incapacity of a person to marry are a denial of the potential dynamics of the persons who mar-

ried. So, I reject the substantive and procedural law of the tribunal because, in great part, it bases its annulment decisions on the retropective conclusions and judgments of psychiatrists and psychologists. More importantly, the tribunal is attempting to make a retroactive decision based partly on events subsequent to the marriage. How absurd it would be for the tribunal to make a psychological evaluation of the capacity to marry at the time of marriage, even with the aid of experts, except perhaps in rare but obvious cases like an idiot or a gross psychotic. This is retrospective determinism. It is, in fact, an attempted static categorization of persons. Things may be static. Persons are not.

....Furthermore, all tribunal judges are priests, the vast majority of whom have no academic qualifications in psychiatry, psychology, or counseling, and very few of whom have had any disciplined supervision in evaluating personal or marital dynamics. Priests have no existential personal experience of marriage, separation, divorce or remarriage; nor, since there are no women priests, do priest judges

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have any knowledge of the feminine mystique. In fact, the psychiatrists and psychologists are actually the judges since most priest judges accept the findings of the experts and base their decisions on their findings.

In the long run, when priests make these decisions about the incapacity of persons to marry, it is like playing God with prophetic wisdom, past and future. There is a failure to acknowledge the existence of the ability of persons to call upon untapped natural and supernatural resources to remake themselves in marriage. There is a denial of hope in the possibility that there could be a charismatic renewal of the persons and of their marriage. The exercise of this decision-making power has no foundation in theology or the priestly ministry. It is the antithesis of Christian service. It is alien to the life-giving, faith-inspiring, hope-sustaining message of Christ.

It is a paradox that today's Church, the self-proclaimed champion of personal responsibility and freedom, in an effort to help more and more divorced persons be free to remarry, is downgrading the responsibility and freedom of more and more persons in their initial decision to marry. It is a paradox that, ten years ago, when there were perhaps three hundred, of a total of six hundred, annulments granted yearly in the United States on the basis of incapacity, the Church, which was considered far more rigid and restrictive than she is today, was more concerned with safeguarding the initial ability and freedom of persons to marry than she is today in granting thousands of annulments yearly.

In asserting the intrinsic merit of the tribunal process as well as its possibilities for expansion, the Church is using this process as a partial defense of its present teaching and law concerning the indissolubility and permanence of marriage. It would be unfortunate if, by reason of the improved application of the present laws concerning annulments, laws which are irremediably inadequate and unjust, we were lulled into diminishing our efforts to seek acknowledgment by the Church of the rights of persons to divorce and remarry.

In view of my conviction that the findings of religious and secular sciences today open the way for the Church to acknowledge in its teaching and its law the right of divorced persons to remarry, the reader may ask why I lay such stress upon the intrinsic lack of merit of the tribunal process. My response is that I am speaking as a lawyer. In present Church law, the only way most persons in irrevocably intolerable marriages may publicly enter into second marriages within the Church is by obtaining annulments of their first marriages. I am convinced that the tribunal process is bad law. The only alternative to annulment is divorce. As a lawyer, I think a couple whose marriage ceases to be existentially alive should get a divorce and, if they so desire, marry again.

Here is an excerpt from a recent decision of the Roman Rota, the supreme court of Church tribunals, the substance of which is repeated over and over in tribunal decisions throughout the United States: "For it would not be enough to find (this man) unsuited for building a happy married way of life, or that he was a person for whom married life would not have been reasonably recommended, or even finally, that he is a person devoid of true feeling for his wife. Although all of this is true of this case, our statement goes further, and we think it is proved by the facts: the man is completely incapable of interpersonal communication, in other words, unable to incorporate into himself any of the feelings of his partner; hence, it is judged morally certain that his marriage consent was invalid."

This man may not be damned by God but he is clearly and officially damned, and possibly damaged beyond human repair, by the Church tribunal. This man is not considered a person. He is not acknowledged to have even the sensitivity of an animal. It would be interesting to see what would happen if a person so described were to sue the Rota or a diocesan tribunal in a civil court for defamation of his person.

A man seeking an annulment must say that his wife was unable to enter marriage because she was a schizophrenic, a chronic alcoholic, a lesbian, a psychopath, or because she was grossly immature, lacked due discretion or was highly neurotic. In one way or another, he must claim that on the day of their marriage she was emotionally or mentally crippled, that she was unable to give or receive marital affection, that she was unable to be a loving wife or to receive him as a loving husband. Similarly, a woman seeking an annulment must describe her husband with name-calling words or phrases.

What is the Catholic Church doing, using this name-calling process? If a man and woman know that their marriage was never truly alive, that they were never married at all, or that their once alive marriage is now dead, why does the Church force them to call each other names, to hurt each other, to reopen old wounds? If persons in sick or dead marriages are guilt-ridden or are hurting themselves by burying past events, mistakes or poor judgments, they should work out these problems freely with qualified professional counselors. The Church is out of order in forcing persons to submit to psychiatric examinations or psychological tests under the threat of denying them the right to remarry and to continue to receive Holy Communion. These examinations and tests are made with a view to determining the capability of a person to enter into a marriage which has already failed beyond the point of no return. This is

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a fruitless procedure. It is not related to the mission or function of the Church.

When a marriage is broken with finality, qualified persons such as psychologists and psychiatrists are sometimes unable to say with sureness whether a husband and wife are sick, whether one or the other is sick, whether one is making the other sick or whether they are simply sick of each other.

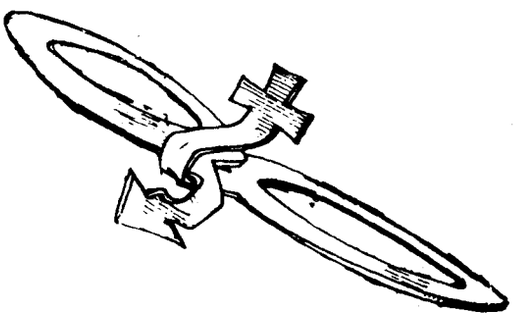
In the common estimation of men and women when a man and a woman exchange marriage vows, when each says "I do", they mean it. They are married. Only in very, very rare instances is anyone—lay person or priest or psychiatrist—able to say with sureness that these persons were unable to do what they said they would do when they took each other as man and wife.

As things now stand, in some tribunals, a good canon lawyer can obtain an annulment for any person whose marriage has broken down. This practice attempts to salvage the idea that every true marriage is indissoluble. It does not face the fact that some true marriages dissolve. They die. Fewer and fewer separated and divorced persons are willing to be a part of the process. They are saying: "I wasn't married? That's ridiculous! Maybe I should not have married but I did marry. My marriage became meaningless, but I meant it when I married. I know I was married. I know I'm not married now and I want to get married again. Don't play games with me. Help me. I need the Church to acknowledge that my marriage is dead, that I have a right to remarry and a right to continue to receive Holy Communion."

The worst aspect of the tribunal process is the name-calling. When a marriage is annulled by the Church, at least one of the persons is called a name. This is the reason for the annulment, that is why the annulment is granted. The Church annulment decree may read in part: "She has a severe anxiety neurosis." —"He was a confirmed alcoholic."—"He is a schizophrenic."—"He has a personality disorder."—"He is a psychopath."—"She is a lesbian." These are reasons given for annulments, even though they are sometimes more delicately phrased. None of these terms should be equated with incapacity—incapacity to make a contract or commit a crime or to get married. Why is the Church, in the name of Christ, throwing around like confetti terms which only psychiatrists and psychologists have a right to use and which they should use only with great reluctance, with medical precision, with positive therapeutic measures in mind and with the utmost respect for the dignity, privacy and confidentiality of their patients?

In 1974, an annulment was granted by a United States tribunal for the reason that, on the day of the marriage, the parties were mutually and reciprocally incapable of marrying each other even though each of them may have been capable of marriage with a person other than the partner in this particular union. This basis for annulment is different from the personal incapacity described above. Mutual and reciprocal incapacity strikes at the absence of a realizable marital relationship between a particular man and a particular woman. It presumes that they are normal in all other respects.

The arguments advanced against affirmative annulment decisions based on the personal incapacity of one or both parties at the time of the marriage apply equally, if not more so, to decisions based solely on mutual and reciprocal incapacity. When two persons marry, it is a basic and undeniable fact that, as individuals and as a couple, they are possessed of unpredictable dynamic qualities. If their marriage ends in disaster, it is deterministic as well as inhumane and unChristian to conclude retrospectively that, on the day they married, the disaster was inevitable. It would be a clear-cut denial of their basic ability to



make and to act on free choices to say that neither of them nor both of them together had been able, in the course of their marriage, to make choices which could have made their marriage a happy one.

Paradoxically, in a 1975 decision, the Roman Rota, while clearly upholding personal incapacity to marry as grounds for an annulment, stressed with equal clarity that mutual and reciprocal incapacity is not a basis or reason in Church law for the annulment of a marriage.

The contradiction between this United States decision and the reasoning of this Rotal decision illustrates a conflict between Rotal practice and the practice of United States tribunals. This contradiction highlights even more the inhumaneness and lack of Christianity of tribunal annulment decisions because it makes us aware that a case which is decided negatively before one tribunal would be decided affirmatively before another tribunal. This should be explained in further detail.

In tribunals in the United States, there are large areas of disagreement as to the meaning and limits of a personal incapacity to marry and the mutual incapacity of a particular couple to marry each other. It happens often, too, that the interpretation of the

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law and its application in particular cases will be either liberal or conservative depending upon the personality and temperament of the local bishop or the presiding judge of the tribunal. Moreover, when a tribunal seeks to buttress its decision with material taken from the jurisprudence of decisions of the Rota it is able to find Rotal decisions favoring a variety of interpretations, including contradictory interpretations, of the meaning of personal and mutual incapacity to marry. It should be pointed out, too, that the cultural background of most of the Rotal judges is so vastly different from cultural conditions in the United States that this Rotal jurisprudence is, in many instances, different from and inferior to the jurisprudence of well-developed United States tribunals steeped in local life and customs. This cultural variance is further aggravated by the fact that Rotal judges are only rarely in personal contact with persons from the United States whose marriages are being considered by the Rota for possible annulment.

There are, then, diverse ways of interpreting the law as well as diverse ways of applying it to particular cases. It should be noted, too, that tribunals vary in their methods of collecting facts and in their determination of what facts are pertinent. However, even given the same set of facts, one tribunal may give an affirmative decision, another tribunal a negative decision. Recently, the Rota, in a negative decision, reversed affirmative decisions given by a local tribunal and the first tribunal of appeal. In another case, an affirmative decision given by the local tribunal was reversed by the first tribunal of appeal and this reversal was upheld by the Rota.

It is unreal for tribunal judges to decide, with moral certitude as the present law puts it, that a husband or wife was so sick that he or she was unable to enter into a true marriage. The tribunal is coming to certain conclusions on the basis of facts which are often uncertain, incomplete or subject to a variety of interpretations, and on the basis of law which is also subject to a variety of interpretations. It is my conviction that, because of its static appraisal of marriage, the tribunal, in fact, often grants divorces rather than annulments. This conviction is reinforced by the fact that, in some tribunals, almost every annulment case which is introduced today results in an affirmative decision, the granting of an annulment.

Only recently, the Roman authorities have become so concerned about the number of annulments being granted in the United States that they have insisted that the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops establish in Washington a national board to review both all affirmative decisions as well as the reasons given by the officially designated defenders of the marriage bond for not appealing against these decisions to higher tribunals.

In upholding the tribunal as the major vehicle whereby persons may seek freedom from intolerable marriages, the Church is inhumane and unChristian in accepting the policy evidenced in affirmative tribunal decisions that persons are personally or mutually incapable of marriage. The fallacy of this policy is underscored by the fact that tribunal decisions are neither sure nor certain. Neither tribunal judges in the United States nor Rotal judges are demonstrating that they are consistent in determining which persons were capable of marrying and which persons were incapable of marrying at the time they exchanged their vows.

The lack of consistency in tribunal decisions is justified by proponents of the tribunal as a human factor which is present equally in civil courts; but there is no parity between tribunal decisions and most civil court attempts to determine capacity to commit crime or stand trial. It presents the same complexities and uncertainties. Tribunal decisions do not involve crime. Tribunal decisions involve only the capacity to marry. In this area, there is simply no room for contradictory decisions because of diverse interpretations of the law or of the facts, because of the difference in the personality and character traits of the judges or because of the disparity of competence of the judges. This is so because affirmative tribunal decisions deny the abilities of persons to exercise the fundamental right to marry and negative tribunal decisions deny the fundamental rights of persons to remarry. In effect, tribunal decisions affirm or deny the fundamental rights of Catholics in second marriages to receive the Eucharist. The tribunal is not concerned with property or with crime and punishment. It is concerned only with the basic rights of persons to marry.

In the processing of annulment cases, the personnel of a few tribunals do try to help the parties to a marriage understand better their own deficiencies as well as the deficiencies of their former husbands or wives. Thus, in the event an annulment is granted, the parties may be able to be more knowledgeable, more mature, more aware of the meaning of a marital affection, and prepared to enter a second marriage with more hope of the fulfillment of a commitment to a happy, permanent marriage. (There is little evidence, however, that many persons who obtain annulments are motivated to seek professional help.) Moreover, even if this were true in the processing of all cases by the personnel of all tribunals, it would not justify the tribunal decision that their first marriage never in fact existed, that when a couple first took each other as husband and wife in marriage they were unequivocally unable to marry each other.

It is significant that in this consideration of tribunal annulment decisions asserting the incapacity of

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persons to marry, we are not considering a procedure which the Catholic Church applies only with Catholics or to sacramental marriages, that is, marriages in which both parties have been baptized in the Christian faith. It is ordinarily applied to all presumably true marriages, including marriages in which one or both parties have not been baptized. It is not related to marriage in its sacramental aspects.

Are Jews and Protestants who are divorced and remarried aware that the Catholic Church does not look upon their second marriages as true marriages? Is the divorced person who is not a Catholic aware that if he or she wishes to marry a Catholic with the approval of the Catholic Church it is necessary for him or her to subject himself or herself to the above-described laws of the Church? Can we truly talk about good Jewish-Catholic cooperation or Protestant-Catholic ecumenism, when we insist that divorced Jews and Protestants subject themselves to the indignities of the tribunal process in order that they may marry Catholics or have their marriages to Catholics acknowledged by the Church?

For most divorced persons, whether they be Catholic or other than Catholic or of no religious persuasion, the tribunal annulment process is ordinarily the only way they may be considered free to marry a second time with the approval of the Catholic

Church. Discerning divorced persons who are not Catholic, if they get beyond the point of incredulity, will find this demeaning. Discerning Catholics often reach the same conclusion.

The tribunal annulment process strips one or both parties in a marriage of their most basic human quality, the ability to decide freely and to act out what they decide. God, in creating man with free will, decided not to do this. In law, is there a humane and Christian alternative to the resolution of the problem of the irrevocably intolerable marriage? There is. It is the positive acknowledgment of the need and value of divorce when a marriage is or becomes meaningless, when the continuing relationship of husband and wife is destructive of them as persons.

There is within the Church today a concern that the acknowledgment of the rights of persons to divorce and remarry will foster a divorce mentality so that couples entering marriages may be less committed to permanency and indissolubility in their initial marital vows. Certainly there is a risk. However, given the increasing number of persons being alienated from the Church because of her present laws concerning divorce, it is a necessary risk. It is, in fact, a responsible and superable risk. Risk or no, prohibition or no, a sizable number of Catholic marriages end up in divorce. Part of our task is to overcome the already existing divorce mentality. This task is not being accomplished by the tribunal.

What is happening now, in areas where annulments are now granted readily and quickly, is that an annulment mentality is being fostered. In this milieu, some couples who suffer intolerable periods in their marriages, are beginning to speculate whether or not they are actually married. Such speculation is pervasively destructive of the commitment to permanency. On the other hand, there is a creative and strengthening tension in the conviction that a commitment to permanency surely exists and that the cessation of the commitment, divorce, is a healthy solution only when a marriage is irremediably and irrevocably intolerable, when the fulfillment of the commitment to permanency is beyond reach.

An increased sensitivity to the possibility of annulment is personally and socially destructive because it is fatalistic, because it embodies the pessimistic view that some marriages are doomed to disaster. An increased sensitivity to the possibility of divorce is a risk which tests the resourcefulness of persons and society and heightens the awareness of the values as well as the risks of freedom. The very risk of divorce highlights the value of the permanency of marriage.

The secular community and the religious community in the United States would be well served by civil laws which would encourage couples thoughtfully and responsibly to commit themselves to permanent marriages, to be ready to make sacrifices to preserve this commitment, to learn from the events, mistakes and poor judgments which sometimes make the commitment impossible of fulfillment. Catholic lawyers, legislators and judges would do well to encourage the enactment of such laws. In this context, the Catholic Church would do well to be as warmly present at a second marriage as she is at a first marriage.

Many divorced persons have need of a sure, humane, Christian acknowledgment by the Catholic Church of their right to remarry. The tribunal acknowledgment is neither humane nor Christian. The fact that it is not even a sure acknowledgment of the right or lack of right to remarry compounds its lack of humaneness, its lack of Christianity. The abolition of the tribunal would be an undisguised blessing. It would remove a major obstacle to a clear view by the Catholic Church of the other issues being faced in neighborhoods and nations. The abolition of the tribunal may free millions of divorced persons to grapple openly with other institutions, religious and secular, which would stifle the human spirit.

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BORN AGAIN

THE SCREEN

The images in Robert Altman's *3 Women* have a cookie-cutter quality to them, reproducing themselves identically as if stamped out by some mechanical process. Every time she gets in her car, for instance, Millie (Shelly Duvall) closes the door on a little corner of her dress which protrudes outside. Funny as this detail is the first time it occurs, it becomes almost annoying when we see it over and over again. But it also ceases to be just a sight-gag that's being worked to death and becomes something more like a fact of life. This repetition, we realize, is in the very nature of the world where Millie lives—a world of package foods, manufactured expectations and ready-made tastes. The repetitions that kill the joke make us feel sharply as well the deadness of Millie's whole existence, its reduction of life to something no longer even organic.

Indeed, the people themselves seem to be little more than a part of this imagery at first. They too seem to have been mechanically reproduced. Among the other employees at the geriatric spa where Millie works are a pair of twins so identical that they smooth their hair at precisely the same moment with precisely the same gesture. Everyone else in the film has an identical twin in some other character too. The unshaven young doctor who runs the spa has his counterpart in an unshaven old man who turns up as the father of Millie's roommate Pinky (Sissy Spacek). The best friend of a Middle-Eastern girl employed at the spa is the only other non-European working there. The spa becomes a great ark containing everyone within it in pairs and floating on the deluge of the mineral springs that bubble up beneath it. Even Millie has her double, in Pinky. The night that Pinky steps out of their apartment to throw herself in the swimming pool and commit suicide, she catches her housecoat in the front door just the way Millie is always catching her dress in the car.

Beyond merely duplicating each other, Millie and Pinky actually become the same person in the end. There are signs all along that there is really only one of them. Pinky is not only from Texas and named Mildred like her roommate, but has used Millie's Social Security number, it turns out, on all the forms at work. Millie's diary, in which Pinky snoops early in the film, seems later to have been taken over by Pinky herself. Reading a few passages out of it makes Millie now the snooper. The single person Millie and Pinky become is in fact the third woman referred to in the title, Willie (Janis Rule), the wife of the man who owns the apartment where the girls live. After Millie and Pinky have each had an unconsummated affair with him, Willie has his still-born child. Then he himself dies mysteriously, and the three women move in together.

These three women get life backwards just as all Altman characters do—as do those in *Nashville,* for example, which begins with a recuperation and ends with an injury. *3 Women* begins with people who are dying of old age, the people at the geriatric spa, and ends with a birth. In order to deal with this non-sequitur and make birth and death follow once more from each other, you have only to see the exchange of personalities between Millie and Pinky as a process of being born again, of coming back from the dead. After her suicide attempt, Pinky does, almost literally, come back from the dead. The swan dive she takes into the pool leaves her comatose until after her parents come from Texas to visit her in the hospital. The night they arrive, Millie catches this aging couple making love at the apartment where she puts them up, and the next morning Pinky is born again at the hospital, coming out of the coma at last with a completely new personality.

Pinky's twin in this as in everything else, Millie is also born again, at least figuratively, in *3 Women.* A person like Millie is so pitiful a modern type that making a movie about her is by nature, practically, an effort to bring someone back from the dead. Altman's films have often dealt in stereotypes before, and they have just as often been content to leave it at that, ending with characters still the same mere caricatures they were at the beginning. But this time, having begun with a character whose hopes and values are so trite, so mass-produced, they are scarcely human at all, Altman wants to transform her by the end. He wants to overcome our instinctive contempt for her, to individualize her and make us take her seriously. To accomplish this he really does have to breathe life into her somehow. He has to resuscitate her the way the ambulance crew does Pinky after she is hauled out of the pool.

Resuscitate is the right term for it too, for what finally opposes all the imagery of mechanisms in Altman's film is an imagery of water. At the beginning Millie and Pinky descend into the waters of the spa along with the dying old people in their care, and later when Pinky is rescued from the swimming pool, both women, in effect, emerge from the water again. The emergence of Pinky's new personality at that point is almost like an evolutionary process. The bottom of the pool has been covered with bizarre frescoes by Willie, who is a painter. In her work reptilean preterhuman beings writhe in fury. Thus Pinky's emergence from the pool seems almost an emergence of life itself from some primeval swamp, some ocean of prehistory. It marks the evolution of a lower form into a higher, into a human being at last. Indeed, beyond mere evolutionary process, beyond phylogeny, Pinky's rescue from the pool becomes a religious mystery as well. It re-enacts the myth of baptism. It completes Altman's re-creation of the trinity

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in the name of the Mother (Millie), the Daughter (Pinky) and the Holy Ghost (Willie). Amen.

COLIN L. WESTERBECK, JR.

ASHES AND AFTER

THE STAGE

"An Arresting New Voice from Britain." The phrase was headline on Mel Gussow's very good interview with David Rudkin in the January 23 *New York Times*. The occasion was the opening of *Ashes* at the Public Theatre in a production that had already played at the Manhattan Theatre Club. The irony was that the "new voice" had been trying to make itself in the theater since 1960, when *Afore Night Come* was produced at Oxford where the 24-year-old Rudkin was working on an M.A. It took fifteen years for *Afore Night Come* to make it to the United States, a production at Long Wharf in New Haven in 1975; the next year saw the American premiere of *Ashes* at the Mark Taper in Los Angeles. It is not unusual for an English playwright to be unknown in this country (*v.* Charles Wood, David Pinner), but Rudkin was still so uneasy a presence on the English theatrical scene that he could write in *Contemporary Dramatists* (1973), "Ten years in the writing business, and I still find no outlet for what gifts I have." There is a touch of overstatement in the lament since Rudkin has had more than a dozen productions on stage or in television since he began writing, although only a few of his plays have been published. Rudkin can be a difficult playwright, as his fascinating radio play *Cries from Casement as His Bones Are Brought to Dublin* (1973) indicates, and he is never a congenial one as, say, Tom Stoppard and Simon Gray are, because his subject matter tends to be abrasive. Now—with the successful revival of *Afore Night Come* at the Royal Shakespeare in 1974 and the reception of *Ashes* in this country—he stands a chance of escaping the dream he reported in *Contemporary Dramatists* in which, at the end of a party in his honor, he found himself clearing up the dirty dishes.

Ashes recounts the attempts of a childless couple to become parents. Much of the early part of the play shows Anne and Colin Harding following the often conflicting advice of a doctor, a semenologist and a gynecological surgeon. Since many of the lines at this point are funny, it would be a simple matter to convert *Ashes* into an acid satire on the methods and results of scientific sexologists. Rudkin is not after such easy game. Although his view of nature's medical helpers is not particularly sanguine, he intends them to be characters not caricatures. Their small pomposities, their clumsy kindnesses, the inevitable distance between their income-producing professions and the pain of the Hardings turn well-meaning lines like "Well then, why aren't we conceiving?" from jokes into small horrors. Much of the humor comes directly from Colin and Anne, self-defensive gestures that help protect them from the processes which reduce them to laboratory specimens, machines, animals. "Dignity," snaps Anne as she assumes the dog's position that the semenologist thinks may aid conception.

Finally, it is the determination of Anne and Colin which stills the comedy in the situation. Their deep desire for parenthood stifles the satiric impulse, or at least shunts it to the edge of a play which deals feelingly with two people being dehumanized in the search for a fuller humanity. The danger at this point is that the comedy could be replaced by sentimentality, but Rudkin avoids that trap too— largely by means of the technical devices he uses. The scenes are brief—although they get longer as they play goes on—usually ending in blackout; they are often aggressively antirealistic as the characters play all the people in an encounter or speak directly to the audience; there are musical jokes, set lyric speeches, philosophic ruminations. All these keep the tears from rising and yet allow the couple to develop as completely realized characters.

Since the play is about losses, the closing in of possibilities, making do in an imperfect world, Anne and Colin finally conceive only to lose the child and, in the process, all possibility of further conception. Adoption seems their only hope for a child and introduces them to a new batch of "understanding" professionals. All the characters other than Anne and Colin are played by one actor and one actress; although Rudkin says in the published script that there is no "thematic significance" to this doubling, surely all the figures function as outsiders to the small core of pain and love that the Hardings represent. Before the audience and the characters learn the results of the application for adoption, the play opens out, the personal begins to be social. Colin goes back to a funeral in Northern Ireland, finds his country moving toward a destruction that appalls him and discovers that he is no Ulsterman in their eyes, cut off from a line of inheritance just when he cannot start a line of his own. Anne, newly aware of the natural ruin around her, of fellow Englishmen (human beings) who want to get theirs now and let the future go hang, recounts a devastating dream which ends with the ambiguous "Take *off* your dead." As we come to the end of the play, we and they learn that they have been turned down by the adoption officials, that "Laughter of children in our house, not for us. Whatever *is*."

There are ashes and ashes. Both the chronicle of failure and the social-political extension of the infertility

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of the Hardings suggest the world as wasteland. Colin explains that when he tried to tell Cousin Sammy that "we have to try to find some new way," Sammy, who is willing to fight until "Ulster is in ashes," made an up-yours sign and said, "Phoenix yerself." The comic negation in the gesture cannot erase the fact that a phoenix has been introduced into these ashes. Colin and Anne were once a playwright and an actress who, sensing their own limitations, turned to teaching. Understanding the necessity to put no-longer-possible selves behind them, they must now face the fact that they will not be parents. The play ends as Anne lifts Colin's head and looks into his face. Not so positive an image as the classical phoenix, the shared final moment suggests that there are living coals in these ashes. As Rudkin told Gussow, "An awful lot of my work is about love."

Reading the play, I had some doubt about the long soliloquies which carry the play thematically beyond the personal story. As I watched the play on stage, the doubts disappeared. The production begins somewhat tentatively, the scenes less vivid than they sound on the page, but as the play progresses, the Anne (Roberta Maxwell) and the Colin (Brian Murray) develop such substance that the soliloquies belong to them, not, as I feared, to the playwright. *Ashes* is moving and intelligent, a theatrical evocation of the public world through the private suffering and courage of a single couple.

GERALD WEALES

STAYING IN TOUCH

SAUL MALOFF

Portrait of Viringia Woolf by Man Ray

VIRGINIA WOOLF is writing her sister Vanessa Bell, the recipient of roughly one-third of the 600 letters which Volume Two of the projected six volumes of her immense correspondence comprises.* The date is November 11, 1918, the end of the most ravaging war in history (until the next one). Outside her window a bled England desperately celebrates: the guns of peace boom, sirens whistle, "people seem to be whistling and giving catcalls and stirring up the dogs to bark . . . oh dear, now drunken soldiers are beginning to cheer. How am I to finish my last chapter with all this shindy. . . ." Not that she was entirely without a certain degree of relief that the end had at last arrived (her set, the Bloomsbury group and its extensions, were in the main opposed to the war: many of them were C.O.s, and Bertrand Russell was not alone in having gone to jail for opposing the war); but "O God! what a noise they make" is the prevailing sentiment. What a bother! After all, she was that very day trying to complete her second novel, *Night and Day*. A moment later, war and peace behind her, she gives Vanessa the truly important news of the day—"gossip" of the sublimest kind, an account of a "tea" with friends of the older generation, "all dressed up so irreproachably so nice, kind, respectable—so insufferable—. You remember the kind of politeness, and the little jokes, and all the deference, and opening doors for one, and looking as if the mention of the w.c. even would convey nothing whatever to them. I enjoyed it immensely. . . ." The report is devastating; all—everything: the people, the house itself, its furnishings and decorative objects, paintings—that entire little universe falls dead beneath her pen. The observations are perfect: exact, lethal. A superb, cruel performance, at once murderous and charming, which proves a mere preparation, now that she has warmed to the task, for bloodier mayhem to come, "gossip" about her beloved friend Ka Cox and her new husband, a painter-of-sorts. Their flat is dismissed with odium—"acid lemon colors against black curtains, and one white rose against a wall the color of skim milk"—and he, of whom "one instinctively says: 'What a Whippersnapper!' " with his "little mongrel cur's body; his face which appears powdered and painted like a very refined old suburban harlots, and his ridiculous little voice"—he is wholly dissolved in acid. Ka, she remarks with almost audible pleasure, got "nervous when my eyes rested too long upon him." When Virginia Woolf's eyes rested too long upon anything, the focus tended to narrow until it assumed the shape and tensile strength of a stiletto whereupon its object, pierced through, quivered once and died most horribly.

Two days later, again writing to Vanessa, again deploring the loud, festive messiness of Armistice (now even more nastily: "The London poor, half drunk and very sentimental or completely stolid with their hideous voices and clothes and bad teeth, make one doubt whether any decent life will ever be possible, or whether it matters if

**The Letters of Virginia Woolf, Volume Two 1912-1922*, edited by Nigel Nicolson and Joanne Trautman (Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, $14.95)*

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we're at war or at peace.") She suddenly asks her sister: "Do you ever feel that your entire life is useless—passed in a dream, into which now and then these brutal buffaloes come butting? . . . I believe having children must make a lot of difference; and yet perhaps its [sic: she almost never uses the apostrophe] no good making them responsible for one's own inefficiency—but I mean rather transparency—nonentity—unreality."

Reading other people's mail, when it's not meant for your eyes (as writers' letters, whatever their denials, often are) is always a dirty business; especially so, when against our will, we are guiltily cast in the role of prurient onlooker—watching, peering, for signs of the fatal flaw, the crack in the column which in the end will bring it down. The years encompassed, 1912-1922, are good years, some of her very best, and we partake of their excitement: the publication of the *The Voyage Out* and *Night and Day* and—far more significantly—*Jacob's Room*, the first of the six novels in the distinctive mode that will project her permanently into literary history; the founding, with her husband Leonard, of Hogarth Press; of her distinguished career in literary criticism. A list of the friends and acquaintances, old and new, who received these letters or walk through its pages as familiars is to construct a directory to the literary, artistic and intellectual history of the great period: Lytton Strachey (these are the years of *Eminent Victorians* and *Queen Victoria*), Roger Fry, Clive and Vanessa Bell, Maynard Keynes, G. E. Moore, E. M. Forster, Duncan Grant, Katherine Mansfield, Desmond and Molly MacCarthy, Lady Ottoline Morrell, Sidney and Beatrice Webb, G. B. Shaw, D. H. Lawrence, T. S. Eliot . . . the familiar luminous company. She "knew" and was known by everybody; as Leslie Stephen's daughter she had been born to that condition.

But we do not go to the Letters for history—of that we have a large shelf certain to swell still more; nor even for biography—there too the record is abundant (valuably increased by Quentin Bell's recent biography), of her and of so many of the others. "Bloomsbury" is by far the best documented of all "groups," individually and en masse; in part because they *were* a "group," the last to observe the rites of friendship, their cult, rather than a "generation," which is a function of chronological accident, common experience, and perhaps a common aesthetic.

We go to the Letters for the excellent reason that they are a pure pleasure to read. Luckily for us she was driven to letter-writing by constant, compelling, almost daily need, equally to write and receive. "Life would split asunder," she wrote in *Jacob's Room*, "without letters." Just as regular literary journalism served as counterpoint to the innerness of the novels and the privacies of her diaries and autobiographical writings, so did the letters serve as a way of breaking out of the isolation of the mind. They were, one feels, a primary way of reaching out when she was alone, of holding on, of staying in touch, of fixing securely the otherwise shimmering outlines and textures of the world-out-there which, in her mind, was always at the edge of becoming transfigured into space and phantoms, something more desolate and more watery. Letters were her health: they were written only when she was well, were a constant reminder to herself and others that she *was* well, and (apart from the occasional ominous headache) never better. They are the "day" and dailiness of her life, the proof and soul of sanity: spontaneous, awesomely intelligent, witty, eccentric, boisterously funny, endearing, robust, original, fond, malicious, magnificently malicious, sometimes wicked, bitchy, even vicious, always observant of the telling detail and the turning, shifting flow of life—of "things happening." Nothing touched her life without evoking a fullness and immediacy of response. They are of a piece—beautifully feminine, womanly, unmistakably herself and no one else.

We also go to the Letters out of impure motives. Knowing their background and immediate foreground, knowing how their life will eventually end, we become voyeurs, pornographers of her psyche. We watch her as her doctors and nurses did—better, knowing more than they did at a time when her doctor believed influenza to be a disease of the nervous system treatable by milk and ovaltine. We watch her as Leonard did. We want to tell her to eat well, watch her weight, sleep and rest, take exercise, guard against overwork and excitement and be mindful of her excesses and intensities. Foolishly, we want to say: Put it out of your mind. Stay calm. Shut out darkness and the night. Swept deliciously along by her wit, deftness, acuity—the sheer marvel of her writing—we in the midst of our relief and pleasure pause to scrutinize a phrase that otherwise would need no scrutiny; stop and turn back to examine a passage, an allusion, note an omission (why does she never mention her mother who died when she was 13? why does she so seldom mention her illustrious father?), peer closely at an odd juxtaposition, watch for the slip of the pen and ponder what it may tell us—how, since we know past and future, by what circuitous path it may lead to the inevitable fulfillment of the prophecy. We read her as we would a character in one of her own novels.

Adoring younger sisters are scarcely new creations under the sun, but her relationship with Vanessa insists on our attention. For sisters (for perfect strangers, for that matter) to share "intimacies" (we're talking about the early years of the century, remember, when Victoria was still warm in her grave and may even have been listening, looking with us over the scribe's shoulder as she wrote)—for Virginia to have mentioned the unmentionable is one thing; but for her to have informed her sister of every descent of the "curse of Eve" (her phrase, along with "monthlies," "periods"—and "affairs" in the sense of monthlies and periods, not in the contemporary sense) that seems quite another.

SAUL MALOFF's *most recent book is* Heartland *(Scribner's).*

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As I've taken unwonted liberties with her family secrets I might as well allow myself license. She speaks of Vanessa, whose life was notorious, a rather spectacular example of the "advanced woman" in that or this time, as an earth mother, as Demeter, Diana of the Ephesians, a fertility goddess (the paternity of whose third child was a popular guessing-game) a sea nymph dwelling in deep waters. Against her own barrenness, her sister's fecundity and beauty appeared mythic in her eyes and perhaps induced her to make of her "curse" a kind of offering, a sacrifice, a vindication. Given her history of attempted suicide and psychosis, and the hovering threat of its recurrence, it was decided that she not have children, though early in the marriage (which was soon to become sexless while remaining loving and utterly devoted) she speaks confidently of doing so, and following the decision she remains preoccupied with what she experienced as dreadful loss, yet another affliction.

Surely this is understandable; it is even understandable that she should have been jealous of Vanessa's children (and yet be a fond and attentive aunt and godmother); but we are in another realm of the mind when the jealousy proves kin to "sibling rivalry" with herself as dispossessed elder sibling to Vanessa's children, her own nephews and niece. Just that: "And why," she asks Vanessa, "did you bring me into the world to go through these ordeals?" and elsewhere speaks of herself as Vanessa's "firstborn" adding, lest her sister be confounded by the news, that by "firstborn" she refers to herself, Vanessa's "darling B.", a pet-name signifying "Billy goat."

Typically in her letters to Vanessa her manner is flattering, enticing, cajoling, entreating, begging—to say flirting and seductive would not be excessive or reckless; typically she implores her sister to visit her (their country houses were within walking/cycling distance of each other) or to invite a visit from her, dangling the treasure of rich, naughty gossip as inducement and reward. Again that is one thing; yet again, making all possible allowances for playfulness, the conventions of the period, fancy, private jokes and the pecularities of family manner, what are we to make of this—again, always, to Vanessa: "Its [sic.] your aristocratic aloofness that intimidates me—who always was so soft and attached, like an adhesive oyster . . ." and "if I stay with you, shall I get special attention? petting and free rights of kissing and stroking the ladies mile. Eh?" (That "mile" is the inner arm, between wrist and elbow, Nigel Nicolson explains in a footnote) and "How pleasant it would be to see you here, or to roll on the downs together, and the Ape [another pet-name for herself] would steal kisses from the most

secluded parts!" and "It was very melancholy not to see more of you but the little I did see seemed in fine feather, and I had some difficulty in restraining poor B's amorosity, which became at moments violent—Never was there a more lovely creature—and I'm afraid the children mean to make me jealous."

A painful business; what comes of reading other people's mail; small comfort that she herself should have said of someone else's published privacies: "I know its a base pleasure that one takes in these indecent revelations—why do they do it? But if they enjoy it, I don't see why we shouldn't," though she also spoke of the "horror or having . . . all ones private papers hung up in public. . . ." The clinical point, however, must be made; and it must be said that her life and death, including her private papers, belong to us, conferred on us by her genius. Yet to make too much of these elements grossly distorts the harmonic range. The volume begins in darkness; in the early years recorded here she is desperately ill and then slowly, cautiously, convalescent, periods marked by long silence, a terrible emptiness. Then by measurable degrees she regains herself, gathers force, tries it out, sees that it is indeed there at her disposal, extends its compass, extends it further, and still further, until she is confident of it, as we are.

We observe her in the process of becoming Virginia Woolf and taking immense pleasure in being herself, as we must. From that point, allowing for some small lapses, the letters are purely exhilarating (even, to my taste, these endless gossips about servants which Nicolson finds tedious, as indeed they would be if written by anyone else), filled with marvelous observation of people, books, scenes—the incessant waves of things happening. Once she's underway she can't stop herself, as if the joy of recovered and augmented power drives her pen. For once the tiresome word is not abused: she was a "compulsive" writer, knew herself to be one and said it most vividly. Brace yourself: "I wish I could stop writing this letter," she says to Duncan Grant, "—it is like an extremely long visit to the w.c. when, do what you will, fresh coils appear, and duty seems to urge you to break off, and then another inch protrudes, which must be the last; and it *isnt* the last—and so on, until. . . ."

Nowhere in these letters is she the pallid, diaphanous, ethereal creature of legend. One wants to compile a large anthology of her leaping vigor of mind, spirit, senses—of her bounding health. The splendid comic writing of the letter dated 29 January 1918 concerning a love triangle ensnarling dear friends being too long to quote, we must content ourself with a couple of instances from a horn's plenty. ". . . after ten Lytton and Carrington left the room ostensibly to copulate; but suspicion was aroused by a measured sound proceeding from the room, and on listening at the keyhole it was discovered that they were reading aloud Macaulays Essays!"; and in that same letter

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(to Vanessa) she speaks of her "terrible faux pas" during a visit to herself and Leonard from Lytton's mother, the august Lady Strachey. Virginia had thoughtlessly asked whether she, Lady S., had yet been to Tidmarsh, where Lytton was living with Carrington. "She became perfectly glum and stony: and said at length, to L: 'Well, what d'you think of it all?' L: thinking she meant the relationship between Lytton and Carrington was beginning a long account of his views on buggery, when we realized that she was changing the conversation to the food famine!"

At this point she is writing *Night and Day* (in which Vanessa figures prominently as a character) and is soon to begin *Jacob's Room*, the first of the "Virginia Woolf" novels and the gateway to the great years; and she is still more than twenty years away from the next major breakdown, which was to be her last, and the day she entered her element, the gentle releasing waters of the River Ouze in which she drowned herself.

BOOKS

CHEERS FOR CHEEVER

JANET GROTH

Falconer

JOHN CHEEVER

Knopf, $7.95

Ezekiel Farragut, the hero of John Cheever's new novel, *Falconer*, inhabits a religious and social topography roughly bounded by the contours of his name. Voices of Old Testament prophets reverberate down the corridors of his psyche, while, outwardly, he displays both the polish and the paranoia we have come to expect from Cheever's heroes. These heroes have families who—deeply implicated as they are in America's civic and military history—seem always to have fallen, just the generation before, from positions of wealth into reduced circumstances. Farragut's is no exception. Farragut himself, having turned white-collar worker, makes his living as a college professor. He has a wife, a son named Peter, and a home somewhere on the Eastern seaboard (where, customarily, a bowl of roses sits, mirrored, on a table in the front hall.)

As the novel opens, the state is in the act of appending something new to Farragut's name—the number 734-508-32. He is being incarcerated in Falconer Prison for a crime of which he feels himself to be innocent, the murder of his brother. With this fact Cheever takes his largest risk, for aside from the sheer *implausibility* of it, two other problems arise out of a Cheever novel with such a setting and such a theme. Readers are liable to expect from it either a social document, a protest of some kind over the horrors of our penal system, or, more typically, a Cheever portrait of an alienated upper-middle-class American simply translated behind bars. Both elements are in fact present, but it would be a pity to come away from this book having got no more from it than that. Those who suspend their disbelief will find that, in *Falconer*, John Cheever has written a stunning meditation on all the forms of confinement and liberation that can be visited upon the human spirit.

On the level of action, nothing very much happens. Farragut has visitors, writes letters, gets into trouble, is punished, forms a homosexual liaison, and is exhilarated to witness his lover's escape. (Disguised in the robes of an acolyte, the escapee is borne away in a visiting bishop's helicopter.) Farragut succumbs, for a time, to the lethargy the prison authorities try to induce in all the inmates, lest they catch rebellious fire from reports of an Attica-like uprising nearby—but, rousing himself, he begins to build a radio. He sits at the deathbed of the least likable of his fellow-prisoners, a wretch named Chicken Number Two. Strangely mellowed by this experience, Farragut sees Chicken safely across the bar and, in the end, slips back into the outside world in the dead man's shroud.

Take a second look at that sequence of events, however, and it begins to assume almost allegorical configurations: to prefigure a kind of divine comedy, from Farragut's doom-laden entry into the gates of Falconer, through a time in Purgatory, to a miraculous, grace-bestowed happy ending. Yet this is no allegory Cheever is giving us. Rather, he has incorporated into the novel a symbolic richness usually associated with densely imaged poetry or the best crafted short story. In this and in his willy-nilly coupling of the sacred and profane he is reminiscent of John Donne.

There is even a kind of metaphysical wit in evidence: Dante is evoked, appropriately enough, except that we read his "Abandon hope, all ye who enter here," not over the prison gates but in a tattoo on Chicken's backside.

To say that the novel proceeds in symbolic or metaphysical terms is not to deny that the flesh is involved; it is, and often in the grossest way. At Falconer the flesh is always being aroused or abused, subdued or gratified, either in reality or in recollection. Terrible scenes of cruelty, degradation and lust take place. However, when we look at these fleshly encounters of Farragut's and those of his fellow inmates, Cuckold, Jody, Chick-

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en Number Two and the rest, the quality that distinguishes the greater portion of them is, curiously, purity. As Cuckold says of the homosexual hustler he once picked up at the One Hung Low Chinese Restaurant on the strip outside Kansas City:

> All the time he was talking I listened very carefully to him, expecting him to sound like a fairy, but he never did, not that I could hear. I have this very strong prejudice against fairies. I've always thought they were silly and feeble-minded, but he talked like anybody else. I was really very interested in what he had to say because he seemed to me very gentle and affectionate and even very pure.

The determined air of normalcy, of heterosexuality, in all of the attitudes displayed in this and other passages accounts for much of their appeal, and explains why they are to so large a degree successful in breaking down the reader's own prejudices. Yet this tolerant spirit is not earned cheaply, either by us or by Cuckold. It must stand the severe test of watching the hustler at work and the hustler having got mixed up with the wrong customer —of going down to the police station to identify his dead body, complete with twenty-two knife wounds in his back.

Neither the possibility that these encounters are mere lonely substitutes for heterosexual love, nor the sense in which they manifest themselves as brotherly—or, at least on some level —familial feeling is allowed to obscure their darker components of narcissism and, even, necrophilia. Farragut, thinking about his prison lover, a youth named Jody, is prompted to see that "To embrace one's self, one's youth, might be easier than to love a fair woman. . . ." "And then there was time to think upon the courting of death and death's dark simples," he goes on, musing that "in covering Jody's body he willingly embraced decay and corruption." But all is bathed in a mysteriously detoxifying light.

The theology here and throughout the novel is interesting and sophisticated. Sin is interpreted as a radical failure of love and a consequent enthrallment (a kind of imprisonment) to fear. Love casts out fear, as the evangelist tells us, and one of the processes Farragut is undergoing in the Falconer "Correctional Facility" is nothing less than the rehabilitation of his ability to love. More than anything else, this accounts for the softening light that washes over so many of the prison scenes.

One particular measure taken by Cheever bears remarking in this matter of the book's strange and winning purity: it represents, I believe, both an instance of legitimate poetic license and a profound theological principle on Cheever's part. Though most readers will not consciously notice that it is missing—there is more than enough obscene and scatological language to produce convincing replicas of prison argot—*Falconer* contains not a single instance of blasphemy. Farragut, a methadone addict, is once heard to cry out, in the midst of a withdrawal agony, for someone to "Get me my fix, for Jesus Christ's sake!" But no man who describes himself in a letter to his bishop as "a croyant" can be supposed at that moment to be taking the name of the Lord in vain.

Cheever says nothing directly that would explain his decision to delete this prominent feature of the vernacular. One can only suppose that he considers swearing unsavory, and that he knows—as he tells us that Farragut doesn't—"what importance to give unsavory matters. They existed, they were invincible, but the light they threw was, he thought, unequal to their prominence." Cheever, as narrator, goes on to note that what is unsavory "only seemed to reinforce Farragut's ignorance, suspiciousness and his capacity for despair." By daring to eschew that kind of unsavory matter here, Cheever may actually be striving for the opposite—a salutary effect upon all of us.

Some readers may find it difficult to place Cheever's treatment of his women characters in the context of

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They were free and yet they moved so casually through this precious element that it seemed wasted on them. There was no appreciation of freedom in the way they moved. A man stooped to pull up his socks. A woman rooted through her handbag to make sure she had the keys. A younger woman, glancing at the overcast sky, put up a green umbrella. An old and very ugly woman dried her tears with a scrap of paper. These were their constraints, the signs of their confinement, but there was some naturalness, some unself-consciousness about their imprisonment that he, watching them between bars, cruelly lacked.

—Falconer

near-universal tolerance which I have been describing as the outstanding characteristic of *Falconer*. It is true that at first the way Farragut's wife, Marcia, is pictured seems very harsh indeed. She is perilously close to a caricature of the frustrated suburban wife. She never tires of blaming Farragut for her disappointments, never stops kicking him when he is down. A rare prison visit finds her responding to Farragut's solicitous inquiry about the house with a curt "Well, . . . it's nice to have a dry toilet seat." She shows a sharp eye for Farragut's weaknesses, as well as a sharp tongue: "Do you still dream about your blonde?" she asks in the course of a later visit—"that blonde who never menstruated or shaved her legs or challenged anything you said or did?" But she would genuinely be glad to disabuse him of his wasteful dream, if she could: "Don't you understand that she never existed, Zeke, and that she never will?"

Although Farragut portrays his wife as cruelly mistreating him when he returns home from a drug cure with a seriously weakened heart, we are given this interesting comment as well: "He was in too much pain and fear to realize that the homecoming of a drug addict was not romantic." And when he is reliving his climactic scene with his brother, Eben, Marcia appears in it as a warm and sympathetic figure. We remember that she has seemed deliberately cruel only when Farragut is involved in justifying himself in her regard. She has been, in some sense, a phantasm all along—just as unreal in her implacable selfishness as his dream blonde in her docility. The soul whose progress we are following throughout *Falconer* is Farragut's.

A great deal more goes on before that soul's progress is complete, but it will be apparent from what has been said so far that this is no ordinary novel. Better say it is a new version of an old story form, a parable. In this post-Yeatsian stage of things when many of us still feel we are, as the poet says, "turning and turning in the widening gyre," the falcon unable to hear the falconer, how remarkable that John Cheever has found a way to circle back within earshot. His final word to us is an admonition to "Rejoice." *Falconer* is truly a parable for our times.

Familiar Faces, Hidden Lives: The Story of Homosexual Men in America Today

HAROLD BROWN, M.D.

Harcourt Brace, $8.95

The Church and the Homosexual

JOHN J. McNEILL, S.J.

Sheed Andrews and McMeel, $10

SARA C. CHARLES, M.D.

It struck me as I read these two works that John McNeill may be mildly displeased that his book, *The Church and the Homosexual*, as been coupled in the same review with Dr. Harold Brown's recent autobiographical account of his homosexuality. Dr. Brown, on the other hand—were he alive today—would probably be quite pleased not only to have his work as-

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sociated with Father McNeill but would undoubtedly take some comfort that this priest's book exists. For if there is any theme that unites these two books, it is that both relate to the pain, struggle, suffering and what seems to be interminable conflict in the lives of those whose sexual orientation is toward the same sex.

Were someone—especially one unfamiliar with the subject—interested in reading these relatively small volumes, I would suggest first going through Dr. Brown's account and then following up with Father McNeill's.

Dr. Brown, perhaps best known as the Health Services Administrator of New York City during Lindsay's term, "came out" in a public press conference in October, 1973. This book is really the story not only of the events of his life that led to such a self-exposure but of the lives of many of the homosexuals whom Dr. Brown knew. The bulk of the book communicates with deep feeling how different homosexuals have dealt with such issues as "keeping it a secret," if and how to relate the fact of homosexuality to one's parents and how a homosexual can experience life in a small community versus the relative anonymity of the big city. Chapters on how his sexual orientation affects his work and his advancement in work, his relationship with the religion of his birth, and his feelings about how the scientific community, especially psychiatry and psychology, have responded, are all quite direct. Anecdotal illustrations of homosexuals who have married and the nature of both their promiscuous and long-term relationships are all discussed and the author tends not to make judgments of such situations as much as he pleads with his readers to acknowledge their existence. In all the chapters the communication of tremendous conflict and pain is clear. A curious theme, minor perhaps but noticeable, is Dr. Brown's frequent differentiation between the effeminate homosexual and the homosexual with whom he clearly identifies—the man who appears outwardly masculine despite his same-sex orientation. Dr. Brown sums his story up best when he states,

> It was my homosexuality that determined my choice of profession —I hoped to solve the riddle of my sexual identity in medical school. It was my homosexuality that determined which city I would live and work in—New York would allow me to lead the sort of life, social and private, that my staunchly gay nature impelled me to. And it was my homosexuality that lay at the root of my decision to resign some eighteen months after I had attained the pinnacle of my profession.

Throughout the entire book there does not seem to be so much a plea for freedom to choose what many have described as an "alternative life-style" but rather a plea for understanding the fact that some human beings are caught for whatever reason in a strait jacket of circumstances that at best needs to be coped with. The book, though not particularly profound, is descriptive and does seem to get its point across—to give the average reader some insights into homosexual life and lifestyle.

Perhaps because his book is more directly polemic and argumentative, Father McNeill emphasizes less the pain of the condition. He suggests that many people are happy, healthy, well-adjusted individuals who find no major conflicts in same-sex orientation were it not for the social, cultural, religious, and scientific forces that judge such behavior in one way or another. His emphasis is mainly on the religious response to the homosexual condition and he presents forceful and what appear to be relatively accurate historical sources to bolster his approach. The pressure in this book comes not directly from describing the pain of the condition—rather it appears to be strikingly important to the author that you not only take his arguments seriously but that these arguments be accepted as true. Scholars of various disciplines will no doubt gladly assess them and respond.

McNeill begins his work by discussing the need to examine the traditional approach of the Church towards the homosexual. He suggests that priests and laymen engaged in counseling have become progressively aware that "conversion to a heterosexual orientation or total abstinence from all sexual expression are no longer practical pastoral aims in a majority of the cases with which they deal." (P. 1) He stresses the new self-awareness of the homosexual community and their insistence not only for recognition but for some more appropriate pastoral response from the Church.

As regards moral theology, Father McNeill seems to be saying that in the past all homosexual relations were seen as "subjectively and objectively mortally sinful and thus left the Catholic homosexual with no morally acceptable alternative except a life of total abstinence from sexual activity." (p.30) The core issue, in Father McNeill's approach, seems to be that homosexual acts are to be distinguished from a homosexual orientation—the former suggesting some freedom of choice, the latter little freedom and therefore distinct moral issues. His touchstone for discussion is Charles Curran's work, *Catholic Moral Theology in Dialogue.*

He then traces scriptural references to homosexuality, a section that reads interestingly enough. One has the feeling, however, that it would help to be a Scripture scholar in order to weigh the evidence. The average reader probably has to give the round to the author whatever its relative scientific merit, for the argument seems based on the weight of the interpretations of apparent Scripture scholars—most of whom are probably unfamiliar to the lay audience. Church tradition is dealt with in like manner in the next few chapters —leaving the ordinary reader more or less better informed. My guess is that professional theologians could be easily enticed into heated exchanges regarding the material.

The section on the human sciences and homosexuality could give rise to many objections and valid differences of opinion. In an issue so emotionally laden anyone knows that authorities can be found to support whatever

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theory best reinforces the point one wishes to emphasize. McNeill expresses his own strongly felt bias, "most psychiatrists tend to deal in the practical order only with those homosexuals who have severe neurotic disorders or personality conflicts, and almost never deal with the hidden *majority* who have managed more or less to escape severe emotional disturbance because of their condition." (p.114) A number of sources are quoted to support his statement. This chapter reflects the ambiguity of the scientific approach but it does not reflect sufficiently the necessity for further exploration and understanding of the roots of same-sex orientation since in other sections of the book, moral arguments are dependent in part on the relative control the individual has over his homosexuality.

In Part II and Part III, Father McNeill attempts to suggest a more positive approach to the moral theology of homosexuality and its subsequent effect on pastoral ministry. He contends that both moral and psychological thinking "tends to be prejudiced at its source because it begins on a questionable presupposition . . . that the heterosexual condition is somehow the very essence of the human and at the very center of the mature personality." (p.129) Such an assumption, he maintains, rules out the achievement of a homosexual relationship as fully mature and constructive. How then, does the man on the front lines, the counselor, deal with the conflicted or suffering human being before him who finds himself identified as homosexual?

The book loses some of its impact by the manner in which issues are confronted. Commenting on a statement written recently by Charles Curran that "homosexuality can never be an ideal" McNeill counters "But then, heterosexuality as such can never be an ideal either. The only ideals involved in all questions of sexual orientation are the great transcendent questions of justice and love." (p.148)

This book raises some thorny issues and will no doubt arouse a good deal of feeling on many fronts. It does not contribute much that is new—rather it consolidates in one readable book some of the major arguments and trends. It does a distinct service to thinking persons and is most likely a book of great personal courage. It puts down in bold print some of the very real moral and human issues that are not just going to fade away. And sadly enough it brings home once again the fact that the Church has had—and continues to have—great difficulty in understanding and responding to human sexuality—of whatever orientation.

The World Encyclopedia of the Comics

MAURICE HORN

Chelsea House, $30

BURNE HOGARTH

Editor Maurice Horn might have appended a subtitle to this 785-page oversize volume, *The World Encyclopedia of the Comics*, with over 800 black-and-white illustrations, 1200 alphabetical entries and a 10,000-name index —"*The Outcast of the Art World:* a Compendium of the Most Voluminous Art in the History of the World, of the Art That Isn't There."

It must be said at the outset that this book is an extraordinary, resourceful, and polemical defense of the comic strip. Like some forensic defender of the innocent, this St. George in the arena of the arts lays to against the dragons who would destroy the hapless half-wit, the beguiling village idiot, the Funnyman. In the end, against the detractors, he seems to create an ambience, a turnaround to a state of affirmation and esteem.

Criticism of the comics has been loud and long. For example: "the comic strip artist is not concerned with art problems, problems of form, spatial relationships, and the expressive movement of line." Or a comparison with fine art: "The cartoonist tells a little story; Lichtenstein paints the portrait of a whole society."

Against these mindless, dogmatic contentions by critics who neither read nor study the comic form, Horn levels a rebuff: "One can very well sympathize with the resentment and frustration of the critic who finds all his neat formulas of little or no use. . . . The comics simply refuse to be pigeonholed. One solution (and it is the most frequent, if the least enlightening) is to put the comics beyond the pale, to write them off as non art . . . and non-significant."

It is from this embattled position that the *World Encyclopedia* seeks to move out to meet its adversaries. This is the problem of the Outcast Art. It is a story which begins in innocence and immaturity, classic and mythic, which bespeaks the morning of the modern age of alienation, whose hero is the bungler, the simpleton and the clown; and in that dawn it gave rise to the two demonic archetypal spirits of the comic form, Happy Hooligan and the Yellow Kid. And from that day to this, the issue in the beloved art, now spread worldwide across continents and generations, has been the upgrading and acceptance of its halfwits, misfits, dwarfs and monsters in the art that isn't there, the art of the comic strip.

In a recent world conference "The United States in the World" (Sept. 27-30, Washington, D.C.) sponsored by the American Council of Learned Societies, the Allied Council for the Arts and the Smithsonian Institution, which brought hundreds of scholars, academics and experts together, one of the speeches on Arts and the Media was given by author and editor, Maurice Horn, on "American Comics in France." The speech was innocent enough, dealing as it did with the wide-

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spread impact of American comics and their heroes in France, Europe and the world.

As he spoke, he thought, "who would indeed listen, or even care, about the influence comic strips have had on Picasso's painting of *Guernica,* or how film maker Alain Resnais used comic strip spatial concepts in *Last Year in Marienbad,* or how the *Tarzan* comics have been used to teach principles of the New Math in France?"

Before an hour had gone by the auditorium in the Freer Gallery was ablaze with debate and invective; the entire panel was focused on elite and pop culture, and comic strips, with Maurice Horn at the vortex of the fray.

"Junk!" a famous Hungarian author cried. "What will I tell my friends at home—that we came away from the conference speaking only of the comics!"

Like Rostand's Cyrano, Horn was equal to the attack. He parried, "Ninety percent of the novels are junk, 90 percent of the films are junk,"—and thrust home—"90 percent of Ph.D. theses are junk."

The problematical state of the art, as Horn seeks to define it, lies in the fact that "the canons of traditional aesthetics do not apply to this new form." And he goes on to argue, "Because the comics present so many facets, each mirroring the rule of different art forms, they present thorny epistemological problems that need to be cleared away if one desires to achieve any understanding of the form."

What are the different facets? Horn goes on to explain, the comics are like folklore, "inchoate unformed mythologies," but they are narrative in effect and belong to a literary discipline, the tale, the parable and the fable, and are meant to be read. Yet they express pantomime and mimicry, and, as some show, "are a latter day outgrowth of the dramatic arts." More, the use of the balloon is not only a function of dialogue, it is ambivalently "by nature a *graphic* form able to translate nonverbal aspects of language: tone, pitch, rhythm and accent." Beyond this, the balloon transcends speech "addressing itself to naked thought . . . free of all the restraints of organized expression." As we warm to these thoughts, we learn "comics are closer to movies than any other art form" in its movement, optical illusion, kinetic suggestion; and even its grammar of 'shot,' 'sequence,' and techniques of cutting and framing, "the variations of angle and perspective . . . are present in both forms." But in one aspect, Horn declares, "we are in the presence of an altogether new and original form," which can ". . . take us into a paradoxical universe where time is neither consumed nor abolished: the universe of the eternal present tense."

The *World Encyclopedia* is quite obviously no dispassionate study of the problems and personalities in the comics profession. This has caused critics in some quarters to quarrel with the Horn approach, for the style is so clearly the editor's, that the book is measured by its rigorous, arm's length, even *ad hominem* manner.

Take this example, as when Horn casts an appraising look at Garry Trudeau's drawing capability in *Doonesbury:* "Trudeau's draughtsmanship (or lack of it) has been noted in many quarters." The comment goes on, with even-handed charity, though ambiguously, "It should be mentioned, however, that his drawing style consisting of a line reduced to its simplest expression, perfectly suits the purpose of the strip which is literary and not visual." (This kind of tidy distinction makes some of the more voluble critics thirst for raw meat). But the scrutiny continues, undeterred and workmanlike: "Unlike such otherwise divergent comic strip satirists as Al Capp and Feiffer, he (Trudeau) lacks conviction." Now suddenly Horn upgrades him with a fine-honed, evaluative complimentary judgment: "When Garry Trudeau finally sees fit to express a strong viewpoint (whether moral, political, aesthetic . . .) he should be able to take his place in the ranks of the foremost comic artists."

It would seem that the road through this book would be strewn with the broken bones and bodies of the artists of the most endearing art in the history of mankind. Yet, not so, exactly. The editor of the *World Encyclopedia* is not a shallow practitioner of his field. If there are many writers and marginal historians of the comics today it is because of the first world Exposition of the Comic Strip (1967) in the Louvre at Paris mounted by the French Socerlid society (a group dedicated to the research in the comics), and the simultaneous publication of its unsurpassed catalogue which quickly took its place as the definitive *History of the Comic Strip,* a watershed book from which all subsequent histories are measured. Horn played a significant role in both efforts as co-organizer and co-author; and from that day to this, transplanted to America, he has been the leading protagonist and expositor of the comic idiom in the U.S., and is one of the few first rank historians of world renown.

One of the major reasons Horn's book has not been popular in some sectors of the cartoonist's confraternity is that Horn as Editor wears *five* hats: as encyclopedist, he is (1) the neutral Editor; then he becomes (2) factual Reporter and Collaborator; or as scholar, he is (3) Historian of the Comics; viewing the current scene, he turns (4) Critic and Essayist; and as analyst of the comic form, he rises to (5) Aesthetician of Style and Iconography. This is the problem that surfaces as we leaf the pages and confront the panorama of material. The stretch-out of information is like an all-embracing spectacle, data, commentary, aesthetics, criticism; the effect is that of watching a juggler in a carnival; the hats go on and off, flipping through the air with a pace that dazzles the eye while the ensemble of clowns, zanies and buffoons cavort in gleeful accompaniment.

It is perhaps an error to call this a fault of the book itself. Let me hasten, therefore, to correct an impression. Over the years there has been such a dearth of probative information and material about the world of comic art that the temptation seems to have been too great to let anything get away that

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might have any relevant connection with the field. Hence, it seeks to stake out a sweeping, catch-all approach, so that besides history, chronology, summary analysis, biographical data, hundreds of illustrations, directories of comic book publishers and syndicates, it carries indices, glossary of terms, contributors' notes, award winners, bibliography, and the like. And a major insert, central to the book, is a positive joy. This is a summary overview of color in the comics; sixty-three pages of four-color comic book and Sunday newspaper reproductions. The character of the color is especially ingratiating since the treatment takes on the quality of newsprint tearsheets which project the feeling of older, seasoned, vintage pages taken from period archives long removed in time. The backgrounds are faded yellow, to buff and pale grey-green. There are no pristine colors; all hues and tints are variations of secondary reds, orange yellows, blues and greens which take us back to the earliest days of the genre. All in all, looking and lingering over the eclectic assortment which ranges from the days of *Little Nemo* and the *Yellow Kid* to the most recent exotic productions from France and Italy to Japan and the Philippines, one gets a truly heady and nostalgic feeling of sampling rich, fine old wine.

And as we plunge deeper, we find points of arrest in the text that slyly provoke the imagination. Try some of these brainstormers culled from the book (with little trouble at all) and see how well you score. (The answers, good friend, are in the book, and you'll have to get it to find out).

Here they are:

What is the universally-acclaimed greatest comic strip?

What comic strip inspired a full length ballet written by the composer John Alden Carpenter?

What giant of modern art regretted he had never done a comic strip?

What comic strip did the famous German Expressionist and Bauhaus painter, Lyonel Feininger, draw for the *Chicago Tribune*?

Whose comic strip is the first to be reprinted in the *Congressional Record*? Name the artist and the strip.

In the statement, "There is in a cry of despair almost Kirkegaardian in its accent, and thoroughly modern in its premise," name the strip and its author.

This list could go on. Regrettably, space is a problem; but happily, the door to "the gardens of the mind" (in George Meredith's phrase) is there, just beyond the covers of the book. This is a formidable tour-de-force Maurice Horn has given us, a single-minded perception (as we read in the Foreword) that "—constitutes not only a definitive study of a very important . . . art form," but as long as comics as a form prevails, it will continue " . . . to illuminate . . . 20th century civilization as a whole."

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The People I Love

VINCENT A. YZERMANS

Liturgical Press, $10.50 ($8.50 *paper*)

JOHN B. SHEERIN

"Pre-Vatican II" has become a term of contempt and yet the best minds of that Council were molded in the period before Vatican II. I think of men like John Courtney Murray, Congar, Suenens. Luigi Ligutti, whose name is almost synonymous with the rural life movement, was an innovator, ecumenist and land reformer long before he served on three Vatican II commissions. Yet his life and concerns are relatively unknown in Catholic circles today. Yzermans's biography helps to redress this benign neglect of a man whose work altered to no small degree the American landscape and the quality of life on the farm here and abroad.

Father Ligutti began his career as pastor of a small country parish in Woodbine, Iowa in 1920, then moved on to Granger, Iowa in 1926 into a parish riddled with poverty, poor housing and broken homes, all of which worsened with the outbreak of the 1929 depression. Since his parishioners were farmers it was understandable that Ligutti should develop an interest in farm life and in the National Catholic Rural Life Conference. Possibly this interest was stimulated somewhat by the fact that Secretary of Agriculture Henry Wallace operated a farm in the parish. Ligutti attracted national attention in 1934 because of his role in setting up the Granger Homesteads, the purpose of which was to move families from shacks around the mine areas at Granger to provide the inhabitants with decent housing and enough land for cultivation. Secretary of Labor Frances Perkins wrote to Ligutti in 1939: "Among the experiments which have grown out of this last depression, I know none of more constructive economic and social value than the Granger Homesteads project."

In 1939 Ligutti was elected executive secretary of the N.C.R.L.C. with his office in Des Moines. As Yzermans says, "He was propagandist, preacher, crusader, public relations director and spiritual father of rural life." In a talk at the Fordham Mission Institute in 1955 he summed up his life-theme, ". . . in the final analysis the problems of people and of nations are related closely to the land: access to the land on the part of the people, no matter where the land might be; land use; land conservation; the proper cultivation of the land for the production of the things that human beings need on a fundamental basis and then, the problems of the people on the land."

The small town pastor became an international circuit rider of the gospel of the good earth. He was in at the beginnings of the UN Food and Agriculture Organization and was appointed Vatican observer in 1948. "For over thirty years," according to Yzermans, "he was hopscotching around the world, studying farming methods, examining soil, promoting human de-

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velopment, and being a friend and bridge between the local missionary and the director of agriculture and the field representative of the Food and Agriculture Organization."

Ligutti felt that F.A.O. and the Church could work together without intruding into each other's special concerns but he met at times with stern opposition from Curial officials and from NCWC figures, receiving strong support however from his friends, Msgr. George Higgins, Msgr. John O'Grady, William Gibbons, S.J. and Archbishop Romolo Carboni of the Vatican Secretariat of State.

In reading this biography of Ligutti, one senses the shock and disappointment that this apostle of the good earth must feel in contemplating the state of the ecology, described by some futurologists as a Frankenstein monster breathing out threats of slaughter to the human family. Ligutti undoubtedly greeted as fulfillment of a dream "the Green Revolution" of the 1960s that brought the "miracle seeds" which increased food production all over the earth but he could not have anticipated the now-widening gap between rich and poor nations, exacerbated by overconsumption in wealthy countries and overpopulation in developing nations, rampant hunger, rumors of revolutions, pollution of the atmosphere and strident demands for a radical change in the political and social order to insure a fair distribution of resources designed to head off planetary disaster. But Ligutti thrives on problems. Witness his work in establishing a program for resettlement of thousands of persons displaced by World War II and for a mass migration of immigrants to the United States.

Msgr. Yzermans has written a biography in a brisk, lively style, eminently clear. His organization of his materials is uncluttered, felicitously free of nit-picking footnotes. Ligutti emerges as a warm, profoundly spiritual man, not unlike Pope John in his wonderful sense of humor, a big man who could always manage to find time for little people. He was an ecumenist in the 1940s, speaking in Methodist and Lutheran churches, addressing Protestant students on university campuses, inviting Protestant ministers and their wives to N.C.R.L.C. conventions, even giving them a retreat.

In his foreword, the author says, "I have attempted no more and no less than to recount the life of a man from available sources." It is risky for a biographer to go beyond his sources but in this instance I could wish that the author had taken a calculated risk and had read between the lines of his documents and letters to suggest to readers some insights into the spirituality, the irrepressible good humor, the inexhaustible energy of this extraordinary man. And I would be curious to know Father Ligutti's positions on certain burning issues: *Humanae Vitae* in relation to overpopulation; Liberation theology and violence as a means to land reforms; the Jewish people and their "tie to the land." My curiosity however does not detract from my appreciation of Monsignor Yzermans's work. My gratitude goes to him for having given us a very readable biography of a great figure in American history, a priest who loved God and the good green earth.

IN BRIEF

EARTH ANGELS *by Susan Cahill, Harper & Row, $8.95.*

Forgive me, father, and sisters too, for I have sinned. One look at that angelic lass on the cover (lapsed into a post-communion trance or playing "Here's the church and here's the steeple"?), the nostalgia-hype on the jacket flaps, and that snapshot backside (authoress posed as the bust of an Irish *Venus de Milo* who's just finished jigging) and I entertained impure thoughts, expecting the worst: another post-"Vatican Rag" pie-throw at the past's ordained ogres and all their pieties.

Let me amend myself. *Earth Angels* is a hell of a good read. Subtitled "Portraits from Childhood and Youth," it moves as a spare, piquant novel—that is, truer and more engagingly than most reminiscences of the sort. Its prose is catchy but seldom cutesy, despite trips past the obligatory stations of teenage passion: tissue-stuffed bras, petting-fondling crises, *et. al.* Sounding early on a little like a pre-teen Holden Caulfield, our heroine Martha charms us through her girlhood and the post-collegiate vocation that punctuates it. Because Susan Cahill graces her narrator with vulnerability and the talent to perceive the human beneath the stereotype, Martha interests us as much in the anomalies of relationship and growth as in the trappings of her Catholic experience, and Cahill herself is able to avoid that reflective pitfall, condescension.

I'd mention a few of the book's venial sins to even the score—some hip rhetoric here and there, as in its injunction against Jim Crow; the incredibly short shrift it gives to Martha's college career—if I weren't

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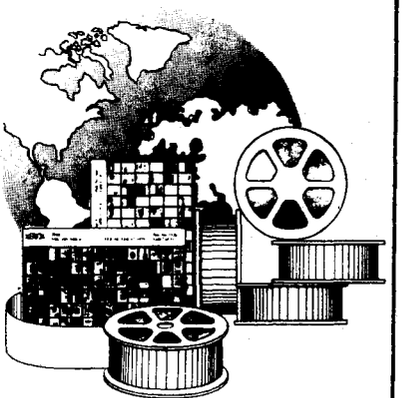

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so heartily sorry for my almost-mortal error. Instead, for my penance, I'll take a Latin missal to Mass next week and think of that lovable tease Martha (an occasion of sin if ever I saw one!) all the time I pray.

JOHN DRUSKA

THE AMERICAN POLICE STATE, *by David Wise, Random House, $12.95.*

Our past indebtedness to David Wise is great. In 1964, he and Thomas B. Ross gave us *The Invisible Government,* a first shot in the revisionist interpretation of U.S. intelligence agencies. It was a revelation—a picture of the things the government does in our name. *The Invisible Government* began a stream of information which has in recent years broadened into a river of classic muckraking journalism.

After 1964, Wise followed the success of *The Invisible Government* with *The Espionage Establishment* and *The Politics of Lying.* His latest offering is *The American Police State.*

Whether you conceive of the activities of U.S. intelligence agencies as reflections of a "rogue elephant" or a "rogue Presidency," *The American Police State* is a compilation of the excesses. It begins with a "short grey-haired man atop the telephone pole" setting up the bug on columnist Joseph Kraft's telephone. It ends with the nightmare Leslie Bacon lived through after being falsely accused of bombing the Capitol. Along the way, Wise chronicles the civil liberties violations of the FBI, CIA and IRS, among others. "An American police state has evolved," says Wise, "operating in the shadows side by side with the legitimate system of government. It has emerged in spite of the Bill of Rights."

The American Police State suffers from two problems—one fleeting and one potentially terminal. Perhaps one-third of Wise's case material has already been drummed into the consciousness of any daily newspaper reader. No reason to have left the material out, but it does add some intellectual drag to an otherwise well-crafted narrative. The second problem is serious, even more so because it is typical of writers in the field. The intelligence establishment did not "just grow" like Topsy. It grew despite, or perhaps because of, its excesses. It grew because a generation of "decision-makers" felt that the stakes were high enough to justify its existence. *The American Police State* is far from a mere compilation of horror stories. It is not, however, the analysis of the individuals and institutions that benefited from intelligence "business as usual" that we so desperately need. Systematic change is impossible without such an understanding.

STU COHEN

REVIEWERS

JANET GROTH is a member of the editorial staff of the *New Yorker.*

DR. SARA C. CHARLES is a psychiatrist in Chicago and a medical school professor. Her work has appeared in *The Critic* and other journals.

BURNE HOGARTH, artist and author, was for many years the illustrator of the Tarzan comic strip. He has had two major exhibitions at the Museum of Decorative Arts of the Louvre in Paris.

FATHER JOHN B. SHEERIN, C.S.P., past editor of *The Catholic World,* is a syndicated columnist in the Catholic press.

JOHN DRUSKA is a writer who currently teaches high school in Indianapolis.

STU COHEN is a free-lance journalist living in Cambridge, Mass.

Steinfels (Cont.)

It is the latter aspect that is distressing. Was their liberalism (and I use the term, uneasily, for whatever vague outlook unites of S.D.S., A.D.A. and the N.A.A.C.P.) so naively optimistic that it denied the existence of slobs or kid punks or the perpetrators of hideous crimes? Did it romanticize the demoralization of the disadvantaged and rationalize the cruelty of the criminal? Possibly, but I doubt it. Mr. Leonard is too smart and Ms. Potts too experienced.

Or did this liberalism admit of such harsh reality while softly denying that it should ever confront *them?* Haven't I paid my dues, stood up for the underdogs? Why should I be threatened, gutted with fear, spittled, with their resentment? Is it, then, not liberalism but middle-class-ness that is the issue, the root of their shock of not being exempt from the disorder and danger of city life? Again, possibly. But that, too, seems too easy.

If so many middle-class liberals chafe at their own convictions, bark at their own selves, under the pressures of our metropolises, isn't that because these convictions have so little to say about the immediate problems they face? Domestic economy, election reforms, international affairs: liberalism chatters on. Your child gets mugged in the park: suddenly it's mute. One could of course think about welfare reform and social deprivation—these are not, after all, irrelevant—but that is a ludicrous response; and liberals, laughing at Leonard Bernstein's portrayal of Officer Krupke or at some of the self-martyred inhabitants of Feifferdom, have long known it. Liberalism as a determinist, even if humanitarian, *weltanschauung* substituting social forces for individual responsibility is a desperate and barren denial of what we experience. But even liberalism in a more genuine form is of little help often enough. It alerts us to the complexity of social issues. It asks us not to accept (and rightly, I believe), without scrutiny, traditional notions, like ownership and retribution; and it offers few values in their place except those of scrutiny itself.

That we ever expected differently is the problem. Common sense, an insistence on dignity and decency, to the point if necessary of force, and finally an abiding of the ambiguity which inevitably will mark our every effort to resolve conflicts—no political philosophy can substitute for these. If we believe that those measures of social betterment that are identified with liberalism would spare us from painful choices, then we should revise our beliefs. A liberalism that reproaches

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us for ordinary human reactions, that asks us to deny what is in front of our faces, must be amended.

Amended, but not abandoned. There is no logic in believing that liberalism has let us down because we expected too much of it, in growing angry with it or ourselves—and "losing the faith." What Mr. Leonard and Ms. Potts have experienced has become for too many others the occasion for recantation, and one cannot help feeling that this, too, is something of a response manufactured by the mood of the decade. A man may alter his opinion on proper grounds, as William Hazlitt wrote about the conservative reaction to the French Revolution; but he need not "pass an act of attainder on all his thoughts, hopes, wishes, from youth upwards, to offer them at the shrine of matured servility . . . a living and ignominious satire on himself." That is what some of our ex-liberals seem to be doing.

But let us begin, as I promised, the third and last time. Again, the *New York Times*, page one, another week later. A picture of young people, crushed together behind a police barricade, dominates the page. Twenty thousand young adults, at various schools and neighborhood anti-poverty centers, had waited in line to apply for federally-financed summer jobs. Some had arrived the afternoon before and waited through the night. The jobs, for youth from poverty families, are half-time and pay $55 a week. Thousands were also in line the next day. Again, many had waited outside all night. The weather was close to freezing.

Is it possible that among these tens of thousands were some of the defilers of Mr. Leonard's stoop, or the teenagers who menace, both in fact and fancy, subway riders like Ms. Potts? Is it unreasonable to assume, as liberals, conservatives, and socialists have for a century and a half, that the availability of employment has a major impact on the habits of us all?

In 1965 Daniel Bell wrote an article on predicting the future. He pointed out what a risky enterprise it was—with one exception. "Once individuals are born, we know that they will be available for work in about twenty years at some reasonable ratio; in this respect, labor-force data are the most solid of all facts available. In this and the next decade, for example, we face a tremendous influx of youngsters into the labor force. . . . This data leads us to plan for increased needs. . . ."

Except that we failed. In northeast metropolitan poverty areas, the unemployment rate for black sixteen-to-nineteen year olds is now 44 percent, for whites 21 percent.

Whether liberalism has a remedy for this situation is another question. I presume that liberals believe it does and I believe that, at least in considerable measure, they are right. This does not provide Mr. Leonard with a means, right now, of protecting his stoop, nor Ms. Potts with reassurance about protecting herself. It ought to provide them with reasons for not abandoning their allegiances. Efforts made five, ten years ago might have made a difference; just as the efforts that should, but probably won't, be made in 1977 might make a difference in the years to come.

There is much that we cannot accomplish with liberal remedies; there is much that we might have accomplished but didn't. Bitter disappointment with these facts should not lead us to renounce what can be done.

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Abigail McCarthy (Cont.)

flower petals before the glittering monstrance carried by a visiting priest before whom our pastor walked backward swinging a censer from which floated drifts of incense; and fostered by weekly Benediction when even our irascible Father John seemed transformed in his golden cope as he presented the Sacrament for our adoration. "O Sacrament most holy, O Sacrament divine. . . ." It was all attractively mysterious and very remote from our lives outside the church walls.

I suppose one would have to have like memories to have some compassionate understanding of those bishops who have made a last ditch stand against communion in the hand, who fear, at the least, a general lack of reverence—at the worst, desecration. It has been a long slow return to the concept of the eucharist as food for our needs and bond of our community.

It has been hard for those who feel themselves charged with authority to see that the incarnate Christ cannot be protected from himself, from his own intention. With the Eucharist "he threw himself into the current of human affairs for all time" says one writer. And Janet Stuart writes of those who first received it, "They were dull, heavy-witted, jealous, petty as children, having nothing but their blunt goodwill, obedience and half-selfish love." To them he said, "Take and eat." And their successors have continued to call him among us whether they were ascetics and saints or venal, political, skeptical clerics—it made no difference to him because his intention was unequivocal. He meant his flesh to be eaten and his blood to be drunk. That is what he said. The thought staggered his chosen few then. It is staggering now.

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